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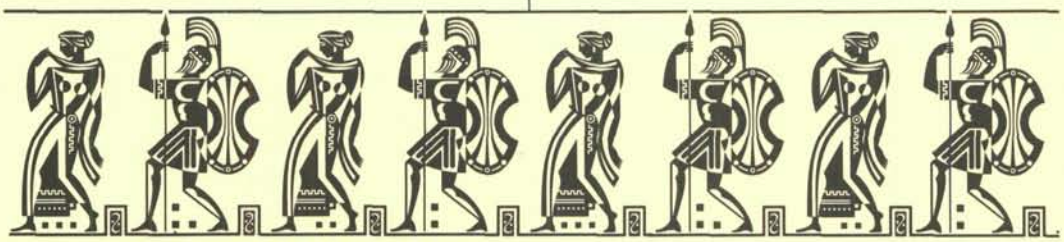

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. For Subscription information call 201-265-3808. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1992 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

POSTMASTER: Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders, and other mail to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

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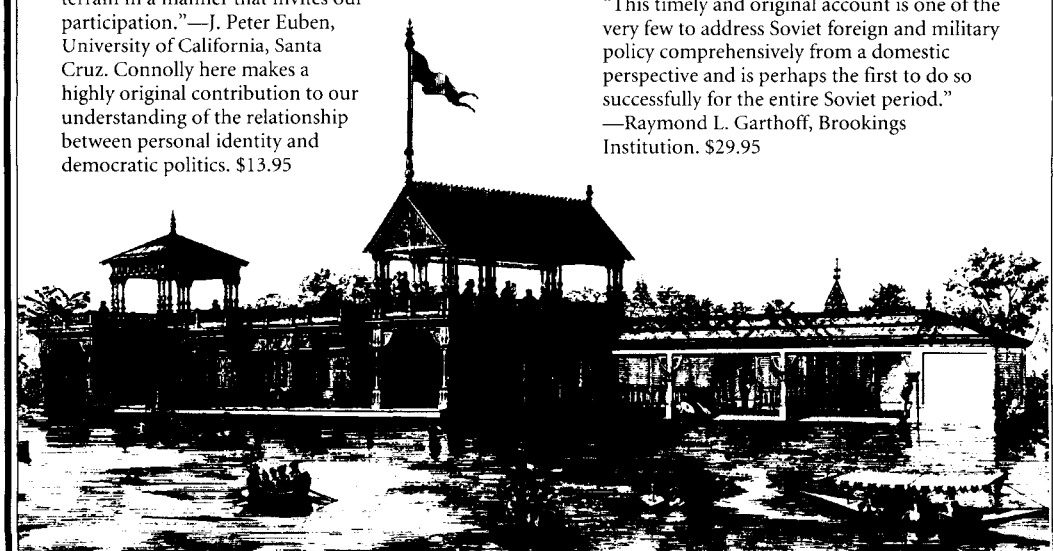

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Compose Yourself

ARISTIDES

As more and more of my illusions about myself continue to fall away—to name just a few among them: that I was a fine little athlete, not a bad dancer, a pretty serious lover, an elegant dresser, a nice-looking fella—the one that I can't shake is that I am a fast worker. This illusion is reinforced by various people telling me that I am very productive, though they usually stop short of using the term, vaguely insulting to writers of our day, "prolific." Odd but somehow I don't feel in the least productive; I feel, in fact, rather slothful. I feel slothful, first, because I know how much of my working day is given over to empty diversions; and, second, owing to my illusion that I am a fast worker, I am always inclined to feel that I could—and should—be doing so much more.

It's far from clear that the world requires any more from me than I now provide. Some might prefer rather less. Philip Larkin, whose poetry I much admire, when reviewing a collection of my essays in the London *Times Literary Supplement* a number of years ago, remarked upon how queer it was that essays such as mine were written in the United States at all. He ended by saying that "the situation would seem to be one of supply rather than demand." Something to it, I fear. I fear, too, that one's writing resembles one's children, if only in the sense that, however much writing one does (or however many children one has), it seems all that one can possibly do (or have). And yet the nagging feeling persists that one should have done—should be doing—more.

The inky-fingered Balzac, whom no one is ever likely to have faulted for paucity of production, writing with debtors at his back and visions of glory before him, used to talk about smoking enchanted cigarettes, by which he meant conversation about books he wished to, but knew he never would, write. I have puffed upon a few of those cigarettes myself, going so far as actually to take publishers' advances for a biography of John Dos Passos and for a book on snobbery. (Returning a publisher's advance, which I had to do on both occasions, is not easy; one has to imagine setting a money-stuffed wallet with no identification in it back onto the street where one found it; not only does one feel bereft of the cash, but one feels that it will only fall into worse hands than one's own.) I have no great regret about not having written either of these books: I have discovered that I have too bulky an ego to devote years of my own life to writing a lengthy book about someone else's life; and, as for the snobbery book, well, I still puff on that enchanted cigarette from time to time, telling myself I may do it yet.

But the book I really regret not having written is the trilogy that I could have written on the job when, as a young man, I worked as a senior editor at a large middle-western publishing firm. True, I am not a novelist; true, even if I had been, when I worked there, in my late twenties and early thirties, I probably would not have had the material or the maturity to write a trilogy. But it was also true that, in nearly five years on this job, I had enough time to write three trilogies, a Finnish epic, and a study of net games in Patagonia. Viewed in retrospect, it was like being on some very generous grant, though not realizing it until afterwards.

On that job, for which I was quite well paid, there were long periods during which I was asked to do very little. A meeting might be called for Friday, and the Thursday before a secretary would appear to announce that the man who had called the meeting had to go out of town and wouldn't return until the following Wednesday. No further assignment was given; there was no backlog of work to catch up on. Five days lay be-

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fore me, on each of which I put on a suit and tie, took a train into the city, and did nothing, *nada*, absolutely zilch. This happened fairly regularly. Much of this free time was spent in general grousing with fellow editors; some in audacious but unimpressive philosophical speculation; a good bit more in office gossip. The years whirred by. I wrote twenty or thirty book reviews on the job and a few essays. But I have always regretted that I never did anything more substantial. A poet, the Russian proverb has it, always cheats his boss, which, I assume, means that his mind is on his poems when it should be on the job. Why should any other kind of writer do less?

From the beginning of my interest in becoming a writer, I found myself fascinated by the conditions under, and methods by, which famous writers worked. For a short while I was taken in by the false drama of the supposedly excruciating difficulty of writing. This drama was probably most economically set out by the excellent sportswriter Red Smith, who said, apropos of the difficulty he found in composition, that he merely sat at his typewriter until little drops of blood appeared on his forehead. It was not uncommon to find others comparing the act of writing to that ultimate act of creation, childbirth, drawing out an elaborate analogy between the stages of writing and those of pregnancy, from insemination (with an idea) through postpartum depression (after delivering a book). Thus the music critic and composer Cecil Gray, in his autobiography *Musical Chairs*, writes:

> Like everything I have written, words or music, or both, it was the outcome of a long period of gestation followed by a rapid parturition. The short score sketch of all three acts was completed in as many months, but the conception had been in my mind for ten years. (Oh, my elephantine pregnancies! How I envy and yet despise the quick, slick rabbit litters of the facile mediocrities!)

Speaking as (evidently) a rabbit-litter man, I have never had a baby, surprising as this news may be, but my view is that, not even nearly all things considered, if it is delivery we are talking about, I should much prefer delivering a piece of writing, every time.

Another part of the drama of writing speaks to the deep loneliness of writers. Even my beloved Henry James could not resist sounding this note. "We work in the dark," are the words he put into the mouth of the novelist Dencombe in his story "The Middle Years," "—we do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art." Mencken, reacting to the general plaint of the loneliness of writers, suggested that any writer who felt overwhelmed by the loneliness of his task ought, as a cure, to spend a few days in a factory on an assembly line, where he would find plenty of opportunities to talk with his mates. If the drama of writers is even minimally true, why, one wonders, would anyone take up such a hard calling? I have myself always thought that it had something to do with the notion that writing, whatever its complications and difficulties, still beats working, though I could be wrong.

To continue with the *Iliad* of writers' woes, let us not forget the perpetual wrestle with language. Among the famous wrestlers, the great Hulk Hogan of modern literature, Gustave Flaubert, reported regularly to his mistress Louise Colet on this endless tussle. "I spent *five days on one page* last week, and I gave up everything for it," he characteristically complains while at work on *Madame Bovary*. Joseph Conrad was another famous groaner about the excruciation of composition, likening himself to a criminal dragging "the ball and chain of one's selfhood to the end," but Conrad at least had the excuse that he was working in English, which was his third language. Valéry used to say that he never finished but only abandoned his poems. But with the great writers, in the end, pain dissolves into love, and even so incessant a complainer as Flaubert has to allow that, when it is going well, the world offers no keener pleasure than that provided by writing:

> . . . it is grand to write [he reports to Louise Colet], to cease to be *oneself*, and to move among creatures one is describing. Today, for instance, I have been a man and woman at the same time, lover and mistress together, riding in the forest on an autumn afternoon under the yellowing leaves; and I have been the horses, too, and the leaves, and the wind, and the words they spoke and the red sun that made them blink their eyes that swam with love. It may be out of pride or of reverence, from a foolish gush of excessive self-conceit or a vague but lofty religious sense, but when I reflect, after experiencing these joys, I feel tempted to offer up a prayer of thanksgiving to God, if only I knew he could hear me. But praise be His Name that I was not born a cotton merchant, a music hall artist, or a wit, etc.

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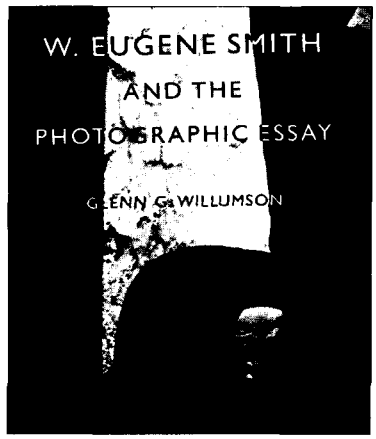

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Which brings me to a topic I approach with the apprehension that only serious superstition makes possible. I speak—fingers crossed, a string of garlic round my neck, and in supplication on my knees—of writer's block, that psychological condition that stanches a writer's flow of words. Baudelaire spoke of this condition of " 'stérilités des écrivains nervéux' . . . that anguished suspension of all power of thought that comes to one in the midst of a very revel of production, like the slave with his *mémento mori* at a feast." I have—touch wood, *kayn aynhoreh*, Lordy be—never undergone writer's block, but I have known people who have and have some inkling of what a horrendous psychological affliction it can be. Hard to know what causes this affliction that leaves writers stranded like ruptured ducks, and we are not talking here about *mallards imaginaires*. A psychiatrist named Edmund Bergler, in New York in the 1950s and 1960s, used to claim a high record of cure for writer's block. His modus operandi, I gather, was to inform writers that this block business was all a lot of nonsense, a sign of immaturity, and that they ought to knock it off and get the hell back to the typewriter. (Bergler was apparently a man who yelled in a German accent, which can be effective.)

My own guess is that a writer can be blocked because he is, in some fundamental way, unclear about what it is he wants to write; or he can be fearful, knowing that what he must write will expose him in a way that he senses could be ruinous to him, or at least to his sense of himself; or he may not have been able to recognize and work through some deep flaw in the composition before him; or, perhaps gravest danger of all, he is stung by tyrannous perfectionism, a perfectionism leading on to literary constipation. In his novel *To an Early Grave*, Wallace Markfield has a character, a minor critic named Holly Levine, who suffers from the latter variant of writer's block. "Certainly, Professor Gombitz's essays, gathered together for the first time, yield pleasure of a kind," Levine begins a book review. Then he alters the sentence to read: "An essay by Gombitz will clearly yield. . . ." When he decides that perhaps it is better formulated as, "An essay by Gombitz will surely yield. . . ." Which is supplanted by, "Surely, essays such as these are bound to yield. . . ." The possibilities being nearly endless, the review remains beginningless. The whole project is hopelessly blocked.

Out of fear of such blockage, every writer senses that he must manipulate things so that his flow of words not only begins but continues. The first trick is beginning. In a useful little essay, "A Writer's Discipline," Jacques Barzun, writing out of his own ample experience, states the problem and puts the point with precision: "There is only one way: to study one's needs and quirks, and circumvent one's tricks for escape." Barzun's excellent advice is to give in to those needs and quirks, but only as a reward against escape. "Suit thyself," he writes, "but pay for it, i.e., *work!*"

The needs and quirks, since I have quite a few of my own, especially interest me. I have always loved to read about the idiosyncrasies connected with the composition of other, chiefly famous, writers. Thornton Wilder must have had a similar interest, for he reports that "many writers have told me that they have built up mnemonic devices to start them off on each day's writing task. Hemingway once told me he sharpened twenty pencils; Willa Cather that she read a passage from the Bible—not from piety, she was quick to add, but to get in touch with fine prose. . . . My springboard has always been long walks."

My fascination with all this made me a natural reader—if "groupie" isn't the more precise word—of the interviews in the *Paris Review*, which I remained, until the editors used up all the significant writers, which they long since have done. My interest was invariably most enlivened when the interviewer would get around to asking, What are some of your writing habits? Do you use a desk? Do you write on a machine? Here I always hoped for the most exotic responses. "I prefer to sumo wrestle an alligator, eat two pounds of pastrami and a large, thinly sliced Bermuda onion on a baguette with strong horseradish, and listen to all six Brandenburg Concertos before getting down to work. For the actual writing, I like to wear my black velour FILA jogging suit, tie my hair into a short ponytail, slip into my Air-Faulkner writing shoes, and, hey, baby, like the Nike commercial says, 'Just do it!' " I hyperbolize but I do not entirely exaggerate. Here is how the then-young Truman Capote answered the same questions:

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I am a completely horizontal author. I can't think unless I'm lying down, either in bed or stretched on a couch and with a cigarette and coffee handy. I've got to be puffing and sipping. As the afternoon wears on, I shift from coffee to mint tea to sherry to martinis. No, I don't use a typewriter. Not in the beginning. I write my first version in longhand (pencil). Then I do a complete revision, also in longhand.

If Capote was a horizontal author, Ernest Hemingway was a vertical one. He wrote standing up, usually in his bedroom in his house in Cuba, using the top of a bookcase, on which room was cleared, to quote the *Paris Review*, "for a typewriter, a wooden reading board, five or six pencils, and a chunk of copper ore to weight down papers when the wind blows in from the east windows." It gets better. Hemingway "stands in a pair of his oversized loafers on the worn skin of a Lesser Kudu—the typewriter and the reading board chest-high opposite him." He told his interviewer, George Plimpton, that he began in pencil, then shifted to his typewriter when his writing was going extremely well or when he wrote dialogue. Each day he kept count of the words he produced: "from 450, 575, 462, 1250, back to 512, the higher figures on days Hemingway puts in extra work so he won't feel guilty spending the following day fishing on the Gulf Stream." Hemingway was a strange old man, as he himself might have put it, but, when it came to writing, no stranger than most.

Hemingway wrote in the mornings, as the majority of writers tend to do, though I seem to remember reading that John O'Hara used to do his writing only after the completion of the last movie on television—"The Late Show" as it used to be called before the advent of cable and twenty-four-hour television—ending his work only after sunrise. T. S. Eliot, whether writing prose or poetry, felt himself good for roughly three hours of work at a sitting. Evelyn Waugh, a more concentrated worker than most, thought two thousand words a good day's work and tended to write best in provincial hotels, generally finishing his earlier novels, revisions and all, in roughly six weeks. Georges Simenon seldom took more than eleven days to write his Maigret novels, and usually had a physical before beginning a new one, so intensely absorbed was he in the work before him. Thomas Mann, another morning worker, used to consider the production of a single good page sufficient unto any day, and most days he produced that page. A page a day, if you don't knock off for too many weekends, would give you approximately a book a year. Nothing to sneeze at.

Except by Anthony Trollope, who would doubtless have used up several boxes of Kleenex sneezing at what he would have considered such paltry production. Trollope, in his autobiography, recounts that he always kept a precise record of his literary production, and that it tended to average forty pages (at 250 words to the page) a week, sometimes falling as low as twenty pages but once having risen to 112 pages. Trollope, who may have been the most completely professional writer ever to have lived, took great pride in delivering all his manuscripts exactly on time and as close as possible to the agreed-upon length. He accomplished all this, what is more, while holding a full-time job with the English postal system. This achievement is a rebuke to every writer awaiting grants, inspiration, encouragement, or mother love. Trollope's view was that one ought to regard one's work as the normal condition of one's life. "I therefore venture to advise young men who look forward to authorship as the business of their lives, even when they propose that that authorship be of the highest class known, to avoid enthusiastic rushes with their pens, and to seat themselves at their desks day by day as though they were lawyers' clerks;—and so let them sit till their allotted tasks shall be accomplished."

Trollope tells of finishing his novel *Doctor Thorne* one day and beginning another, *The Bertrams*, the next. With a talent I have developed of improving upon already extraordinary stories, I artfully misremembered and retold this story so that Trollope had finished a novel in the middle of a morning's work and, rather than let the rest of his morning working session go to waste, took out a fresh piece of paper and began another novel that same morning. Not impossible, after all, for behind Trollope's impressive work habits was a strong conscience, a conscience quite properly fueled by fear of future remorse. "It was not on my conscience," he writes, "that I have ever scamped my work. My novels, whether good or bad, have been as good as I could make them." He then adds that, had he put three months of idleness between these two novels, the second would probably not have been any better.

Conscience, remorse, heavy and even self-invented guilt—ah, now we are coming into my

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country—the country, to misappropriate Sarah Orne Jewett's famous title, of the pointed fingers. I am not sure I could function without fear of incurring guilt in letting down editors, publishers, and now even myself. I am a writer who writhes and therefore writes best under deadline (a phrase whose etymology derives from the Confederate prisoner-of-war camp at Andersonville; any prisoner who crossed the line drawn around the perimeter of the camp was to be shot on sight). As a writer, I am eager to please and anxious lest I disappoint; and here I am talking about pleasing and not disappointing readers and editors. But the critic toughest to get by is myself: not, let me make plain, only the critic of quality—though I hope he is on the job, too—but of quantity.

On any day that I do not turn out a reasonable number of words I feel poorly about myself. Let three or four such days go by and I am able to make myself quite miserable. Deep loathing sets in somewhere between five days and a week of less-than-decent work. Longer than this and it becomes extremely difficult for me to justify my existence. A decent day's work is somewhere between eight hundred and twelve hundred not entirely awkward, imprecise, or ignoble words. On those rare days when I have been able to write two thousand or so such words, I am so deliriously smug that I am really quite unfit to speak even to myself.

Because my own self-regard is at stake—and for so self-regarding a fellow, no stakes could be higher—it is important that I work well. And since I spend a fair amount of my waking life selecting and arranging words, I am intensely interested in anything that will make the job more efficient. Hence my interest in other people's ways of going about it. I am ever on the outlook for new methods, tricks, secrets to improve the flow of my own words onto the page. For years I thought there might be a magic fountain pen that would make me a better writer. I still think there may be stationery of a kind that will make my words, when written out upon it, stronger, clearer, longer-lived.

Is there some method of composition I have not yet tried that could make the difference? Lionel Trilling many years ago reported that the writer Robert Warshow "composed by a method which is unusual; he formed each sentence slowly in his mind, and, when it was satisfactory, wrote it down as irrevocable." Trilling thought it a method beyond his own practical comprehension. How astounded he would have been by the performance of Edward Gibbon, who, after remarking that, as his great history progressed, he found less reason to revise his prose and went on to state that "it has always been my practise to cast a long paragraph in a single mould, to try it by my ear, to deposit it in my memory; but to suspend the action of the pen, till I had given the last polish to my work." In other words—though why one should want words other than Gibbon's I am not sure—Gibbon formed entire paragraphs in his mind before writing them out, and he wrote, as everyone knows, wondrously intricate periodic sentences embedded in impressively lengthy, neatly pointed paragraphs.

My own mind runs only to remembering phrases, never more. I generally have no idea of what any sentence is going to look like until I write the damn thing out, and then I usually rework it a time or two. Because of this, I have never—not as a student, not now—been able to avail myself of outlines. Until I write that first sentence down, I can have no idea of what my second sentence is going to say or look like, let alone what my fifth paragraph will contain.

My method of composition, then, resembles on-the-job training, only at the verbal level. I have grown used to this loose, slightly riff-like method, which often brings with it pleasant surprises. "How can I tell what I think till I see what I say," E. M. Forster once famously remarked. I believe I may do him one better in not being sure what I write even while I am writing it.

Just because there is no order in my compositional life doesn't mean that I don't crave at least the appearance of order. I am extremely partial to having plenty of folders about, also lots of colored paper clips, and fine-leaded mechanical pencils. (I am quite nuts generally about office supplies.) But especially do I long for order, elegant order, in my manuscripts. "My Essay," wrote Gibbon, referring to his *L'Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*, "was finished in about six weeks, and as soon as a fair copy had been transcribed by one of the French prisoners at Petersfield I looked round for a critic and a judge of my first performance." I have always loved the phrase "fair copy," and seem to recall a photograph of the family of Count Tolstoy writing out a "fair copy" of *War and Peace*. Fair copy—implying as it does a fine tidiness, a beautiful intelligibility of outward form to fit what one hopes is a genuine clarity

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of inward thought—fair copy has long been the name of my desire.

Attempting to produce it without the aid of French prisoners or a large aristocratic Russian family has not proven easy for me. But, somehow, without a reasonable tidiness in my manuscripts, I generally feel a vague but quite real discomfort. Freudians used to term this condition anality. ("Anality, my ass," replies a character in an English novel when faced with this charge.) My method of attempting to achieve this tidiness was formerly a most complicated one. I wrote the paragraphs of my first draft in longhand; then typed out each of these paragraphs, usually making changes as I went; and, when this second, typed draft seemed fairly decent, I would then retype it, making still other, usually smaller changes, onto a final, or what I thought of as a fair, copy. Truth to tell, I should have preferred to make fair copies in a perfect handwriting, and would have done so, but for the fact that my handwriting could never produce anything considered anywhere near fair.

I took great pleasure in watching my typed fair-copy versions grow larger. But I also felt this fair copy, once created, inviolable. Making changes upon it, which, given my penchant for tidiness, would entail vast amounts of time in retyping, was not something I looked forward to; I would, in fact, only agree to do so in emergency situations: when I discovered something on my fair copy that was simply wrong or when I felt I had found something so pleasing to add that the additional pain of retyping was worth the pleasure of having it in my manuscript.

And yet, unlike Peter De Vries, who once said that he liked everything about writing except the paperwork, I tend to like the paperwork above all. Writing, I hope it does not depress others to learn, has not only grown easier for me, but I find I enjoy it even more as I grow older. One of the nicest compliments I have ever had was that my writing seemed to show an obvious pleasure in the making; I took this to mean that the author (me) seemed to have a good time setting down the words. I fear it's true. Such cheerfulness about the act of writing, which is supposed to be so exasperating and hideously painful an activity, cannot do my small reputation much good, but there it is.

I remember, as a much younger man, walking down the street shaping sentences in my mind for a composition on which I was then at work, trying out and rejecting phrases and words, when it occurred to me that mine was a funny kind of life. I produced nothing but words about my observations and reformulated the words and observations of others who had written in the past. I also made up stories. For this I was paid, not handsomely but sufficiently. It's a living. Sometimes I have not been altogether certain whether it was also a life. But since I haven't another in mind, I ought, I decided then and there, to calm down and stay on the job, as Harry Truman once told the servants at the White House whom he found weeping upon learning of his decision not to run again for the presidency in 1952. Besides, by then I had been at it long enough to feel, with Montaigne, that "no pleasure for me has any savour without communication."

"The prospect of fame, wealth, and daily amusement encourage me to persist," wrote Gibbon somewhere in the middle of the composition of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. When I first came across that sentence, I typed it out and taped it to the side of the black standard Royal typewriter I had used for some twenty years. I acquired that machine, which was probably already twenty-five years old, in trade for twenty-five dollars and a then-new Olivetti portable with an italic typeface that I couldn't abide. I adored—I use the word with forethought—that old machine. I liked the action of its keys, which I sometimes pounded as if I were playing the ending of one of the more dramatic of Beethoven's piano sonatas. I wrote everything but sonnets and suicide notes on it. I had it cleaned fairly regularly, frequently changed its ribbon—Dorothy Parker, a two-fingered typist, allowed that she knew so little about typewriters that she once bought a new one because she couldn't figure out how to change the ribbon on the one she had—and finally I wore it out. The key for the letter *d* refused to work. I hadn't been aware that over the years I had written so many words with the letter *d* in them. Damn.

This noble machine was replaced by a sleeker item, as it then seemed, a used IBM Correcting Selectric III. I am apparently someone who needs to be dragged into the future, even on small items. With the exception of indoor plumbing, I remain skeptical about most modern inventions. Gadgetry, in itself, does not much interest me. I was late to have a colored television set; I would like to end my days without a car phone; and, though I now own a machine that plays

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compact discs instead of records, I continue to like the look and feel of my old albums. I am a sentimental, entirely passive, and in the end inevitably defeated Luddite. What sold me on the IBM was its correcting device, which, allowing one to dispense with Wite-Out for erasures, appealed to my instinct for tidiness. It gave—and continues to give—excellent service. On its beige, metal side I have taped the motto, this one from Henry James, written after his disastrous adventure in writing for the London stage: "Produce again—produce; produce better than ever, and all will be well."

Perceptive readers will already have sensed that this essay is going to get around to its hero's arrival, round-shouldered and squint-eyed, before a computer. Some among them, who count upon me as a stalwart rearguard man and a permanent back number, may be a little disappointed to find me there. I do not seem to myself the very model of a computer man. For years I have made fun of computerese, both in my own mind and in the margins of the papers of students, for whom such language is not jargon at all but of the air they breathe. In place of such words as *user-friendly*, *hands-on*, and *interface*, I continue to say, at least to myself, usure-friendly (which you might call a genial loan shark), pants-on, and in your face.

Writing friends who have gone over to the computer worked at my conversion. All marveled to me about how using the word-processing portion of a computer improved both the quantity and quality of their writing. I listened to them, outwardly polite, inwardly haughty and disdainful. I think I should never have attempted to use a computer had not the university where I teach offered me the loan of a computer for nothing. I took a bite of the Apple (a Macintosh Plus, as it turns out) that many had promised would lead me into the new Garden of Eden, from where I am writing this essay.

I have, for more than a year now, been writing everything but my personal correspondence on a computer. I have not typed out and pasted to the side of this computer, "Man rides machine." (Was it Emerson or some other hyperventilating nineteenth-century author who said that?) After what I am told was the standard two- or three-week terror of "losing" everything one has written and infuriation at one's own initial ineptitude, I came to grow enamored of the computer as a writing instrument. I shall not go on to report, à la the subtitle of *Dr. Strangelove*, how I learned to stop worrying and love my machine, but candor compels me to report that I have grown fond of the little bugger. Sometimes, at the end of a decent day's work, I have been known to rise from my desk, pat it gently in gratitude, and mutter "Thanks, pal."

I am chiefly grateful to the computer for the splendid possibilities it presents for revision. Working with it, I find myself reworking things, I won't say endlessly and I won't say effortlessly, but with a freedom and ease that I never felt working on a typewriter. This seems to me an uncomplicated and clear gain. The computer also gives me a keen sense of false organization. On what is known as my primary screen—what a friend calls his "primary scream"—I have such handsome categories, or folders, as Essays and Pieces, Lectures and Letters, Snobbery (the butt from that not-yet smoked-out enchanted cigarette), and Stories and Tales (let it pass that I have never written a tale, and seem unlikely ever to do so). I find that I turn on my computer more readily than I used to go to my typewriter, and that I do so at different hours—in the late afternoon, for example—than formerly. I believe I spend more time word processing, if that is what I am doing here, than I used to spend writing.

Yet some of the pleasures are less. I used to enjoy watching my manuscripts grow larger, as their pages mounted up. I rather enjoyed the sound of the typewriter, with its sharp staccato as opposed to the muted clackety-clack of the computer keyboard. (Leroy Anderson, the composer, it may be recalled, wrote a composition titled *The Typewriter*, which was an orchestral arrangement that featured the sound of someone typing at high speed and which will one day be perfectly incomprehensible to people.) I prefer the noble look of an older typewriter to the portable television-set appearance of a personal computer.

Then, too, the puritan in me sometimes thinks that writing is made *too* easy on the computer. I guess I believe that writing ought not to be too smoothly turned out. In ways I am not quite clear about, the computer, like statistics, doesn't care who uses it, and seems somehow to have made it possible for bad writers to write even worse. Alastair Forbes, writing in the London *Spectator*, refers to a recent biography of Anastasia as coming "from the ill-tuned, unmistakably American word-processor" of a writer who, though he may not be shameless, shall here be name-

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less. One rather knows what Mr. Forbes means. I cannot say exactly why, but a book ill written on a typewriter figures, somehow, to be a bit better than a book ill written on a word processor.

For one thing, the latter is likely to be wordier, more garrulous generally—this owing to the ease with which words flow from the computer. As the television with its many carefully spaced commercials has decreased the national attention span, so has writing on a computer increased the national garrulity. I now often get four-, five-, even six-page single-spaced letters from people who once would have said all they had to say in a letter of a page or two. The great value of the computer lies in its editing and revising function. But the same machine also makes it so simple to add material; it is the great friend of the second, third, and even fourth thoughts on any subject. Press a few keys, manipulate the cursor, clack in a few more sentences, then watch as the paragraphs nicely reshape themselves and the composition you are working on lengthens correspondingly. Imagine Balzac, Trollope, Dickens armed with computers! If Proust, who had a penchant for adding things to his already vast manuscript, had written *Remembrance of Things Past* on a computer, he would have had to retitle it "Remembrance of Things Past, Present, and Future, Including Many things Not Remembered at All."

In its editing function—the ease with which nearly endless revisions can be made—lies both the joy and the horror of writing on the computer. One of the most dismaying things about writing is the knowledge that nearly anything one writes can be cut fairly drastically—and then cut again. "You never cut anything out of a book you regret later," F. Scott Fitzgerald told Thomas Wolfe, who had a ferocious cut man—to use the word in a very different sense—in his corner in his editor Maxwell Perkins. The Gettysburg Address has 272 words; my guess is that an aggressive editor could pare it down to two hundred and not many people would notice. An editor in New York used to boast that he could cut the Lord's Prayer in half and improve it in doing so. The computer, of course, lures one to go the other way: not to cut but to add.

So seductive is the computer as a writing instrument that I find myself less and less ready to write without it. I still type my letters. I still write in my journal in longhand. I still travel with two fountain pens and a thick pad of graph paper, in the hope of adding to compositions I am currently working on. But I notice I now turn out less writing when traveling and away from my machine, so accustomed have I become to the ease it affords. (I think of my own laziness here with shame when I consider Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who wrote out his lengthy manuscripts in a minuscule handwriting, the better to hide them from the authorities and make them available in samizdat.) Dragged yet further into the future, I shall doubtless one day before long have to acquire what is called a laptop computer. But I intend to defer it as long as possible. Laptop sounds awfully like lapdog to me. Not altogether clear here, either, who is the dog and who the master. There goes machine, it seems pretty clear to me, riding man again.

The fear in the heart of every writer is the arrival of the time when he must recognize that such magic as he has had has left him and he now writes not only differently but worse. A change in the methods with which a writer works is likely to turn the mind to this possibility. Henry James seemed to undergo no such worry when, in his late fifties, after suffering pain in his right wrist, he started to dictate his books to a series of typists. Some critics have contended that, with this new method of composing, James cut it too fine and began badly to garrulate. Others refer to his new period as Henry James's Major Phase. Who is correct remains in the flux of controversy.

What isn't in the flux of controversy is that the act of writing, even after one drains it of the often false drama some of its practitioners like to give it, retains a strong element of mystery. "Read 'em and weep," say poker players, confidently setting down what they are sure is a winning hand. But you can write 'em and weep, too, or write 'em and laugh, or write 'em and wonder, reverently, from where 'em derive. Whence derives that lilting phrase, that prettily precise formulation, that obliquely subtle observation, that perfectly paced paragraph? Are there more where those came from? Best, perhaps, to shut up and just keep writing.

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Psychiatric Misadventures

PAUL R. McHUGH

PSYCHIATRY IS A RUDIMENTARY MEDICAL ART. It lacks easy access to proof of its proposals even as it deals with disorders of the most complex features of human life—mind and behavior. Yet, probably because of the earlier examples of Freud and Jung, a belief persists that psychiatrists are entitled to special privileges—that they know the secret of human nature—and thus can venture beyond their clinic-based competencies to instruct on non-medical matters: interpreting literature, counseling the electorate, prescribing for the millennium.

At The Johns Hopkins University, my better days are spent teaching psychiatry to residents and medical students. As I attempt to make clear to them what psychiatrists actually do know and how they know it, I am often aware that I am drawing them back from trendy thought, redirecting them from salvationist aspirations toward the traditional concerns of psychiatry, which is about the differentiation, understanding, and treatment of the mentally ill.

Part of my justification for curbing my students' expansive impulses is that they have enough to learn, and several things to unlearn, about patients. Such sciences as epidemiology, genetics, and neuropharmacology, which support and surround psychiatry today, are bringing new power to our practice just as science did for internal medicine and surgery earlier in this century. Only those physicians with critical capacities—who see the conceptual structure of this discipline and can distinguish valid from invalid opinions—will be competent to make use of these new scientific concepts and technologies in productive ways. I want my students to number among those who will transform psychiatry in the future.

But my other justification for corralling their enthusiasms is the sense that the intermingling of psychiatry with contemporary culture

✪ PAUL R. McHUGH is Henry Phipps Professor and Director of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He is the author (with Phillip R. Slavney) of *The Perspectives of Psychiatry* and *Psychiatric Polarities*.

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is excessive and injures both parties. During the thirty years of my professional experience, I have witnessed the power of cultural fashion to lead psychiatric thought and practice off in false, even disastrous, directions. I have become familiar with how these fashions and their consequences caused psychiatry to lose its moorings. Roughly every ten years, from the mid-1960s on, psychiatric practice has condoned some bizarre misdirection, proving how all too often the discipline has been the captive of the culture.

Each misdirection was the consequence of one of three common medical mistakes—oversimplification, misplaced emphasis, or pure invention. Psychiatry may be more vulnerable to such errors than other clinical endeavors, given its lack of checks and correctives, such as the autopsies and laboratory tests that protect other medical specialties. But for each error, cultural fashion provided the inclination and the impetus. When caught up by the social suppositions of their time, psychiatrists can do much harm.

II

The most conspicuous misdirection of psychiatric practice—the precipitate dismissal of patients with severe, chronic mental disorders such as schizophrenia from psychiatric hospitals—certainly required a vastly oversimplified view of mental illness. These actions were defended as efforts to bring "freedom" to these people, sounding a typical 1960s theme, as though it were not their illnesses but society that deprived them of freedom in the first place.

There were several collaborators in this sad enterprise—prominent among them the state governments looking for release from the traditional but heavy fiscal burden of housing the mentally ill. Crucial to the process were the fashionable opinions of the time about society's institutions and, specifically, the oversimplified opinions about schizophrenia and other mental illnesses generated by the so-called "anti-psychiatrists": Thomas Szasz, R. D. Laing, Erving Goffman, Michel Foucault, and the rest. These men provided an acid commentary on psychiatric thought and practice, which in turn eroded confidence in the spirit of psychiatric concern for the mentally ill that had previously generated, and regularly regenerated, advocacy on the part of mainstream psychiatry for their welfare. This traditional concern had lasted for more than 120 years in America, or ever since the 1840s crusades led by Dorothea Dix to provide professional services and humane conditions for the mentally ill.

The "anti-psychiatry" school depicted mental institutions as medi-

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cally useless, self-serving institutions run for the management, and quite unnecessary for patients. These commentators scorned social attitudes about the mentally ill and the contemporary psychiatric practice, but not one of them described the impairments of mind in patients with schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, or with mental retardation or senility. Data about these impairments were what Dix and an enlightened public came to emphasize when founding psychiatrically supervised, state-supported hospitals. These hospitals rescued the mentally ill from destitution, jails, and the mean streets of cities.

Description of the mental problems of psychiatric patients was not the style of the popular 1960s commentators. They were more interested in painting a picture of their own devising that would provoke *first suspicion and then disdain for contemporary psychiatric practices* and did so, not by producing new standards or reforming specific practices, but by ridiculing and caricaturing efforts of the institutions and people at hand just as fashion directed. The power of their scorn was surprising and had amazing results, leading many to believe that it was the institutions that provoked the patients' illnesses rather than the illnesses that called out for shelter and treatment.

Here, from Szasz's book, *Schizophrenia: The Sacred Symbol of Psychiatry*, is a typical comment:

> The sense in which I mean that Psychiatry creates schizophrenia is readily illustrated by the analogy between institutional psychiatry and involuntary servitude. If there is no slavery there can be no slaves. . . . Similarly if there is no psychiatry there can be no schizophrenics. In other words, the identity of an individual as a schizophrenic depends on the existence of the social system of [institutional] psychiatry.

The only reply to such commentary is to know the patients for what they are—in schizophrenia, people disabled by delusions, hallucinations, and disruptions of thinking capacities—and to reject an approach that would trivialize their impairments and deny them their frequent need for hospital care.

On one occasion in the early 1970s, when I was working at Cornell University Medical Center in New York, a friend and senior member of the biochemistry faculty called me about a medical student who was balking over a term paper because his career plan was to become a champion of the "psychiatrically oppressed." Biochemistry term papers seemed "irrelevant." Could I offer him a project with psychiatric patients that might be developed into a term paper satisfying the requirements of her department? "He's a neat guy," she said, "but he is

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stubborn about this and full of views about contemporary psychiatry."

"Send him over," I said, but I awaited his arrival with some apprehension. I needn't have feared the encounter because, in contrast to many other students of those times, he was not looking for a fight. "It's just that I know what I want to do—understand the people who are isolated by the label schizophrenia—and help them achieve what they want in life. I've written enough irrelevant papers in my life," he said. He had graduated summa cum laude from Princeton, with a concentration in philosophy, so he certainly had placed a large number of words on paper.

"Have you ever seen anyone with schizophrenia?" I asked.

"Not in the flesh," he said, "but I think I know what you do with them."

"Well," I replied, "I will be glad to have you see one, and let you tell me how to appreciate his choice of an eccentric way of life that he could be released to express."

I had plenty of patients under my care at the time and chose one who was the same age as the student but who had a severe disruption in his thought processes. Even to talk with him was a distressing experience because few of his thoughts were connected, and all of them were vaguely tied to delusional beliefs about the world, his family, and our society. He wasn't aggressive or in any way threatening. He was just bewilderingly incoherent. I left the student with the patient, promising to return in half an hour to learn what he thought.

On my return, I found the student subdued. I started, in a slightly teasing way, to ask where he suggested I might send the patient to start his new life—but was quickly cut off by the student who, finding his voice, said, "That was nothing like what I expected and nothing like what I've read about. Obviously you can't send this poor fellow out of the hospital. Please tell me how you're treating him."

With this evidence confirming my colleague's judgment of the student's basic good nature in what, after all, had been a heartfelt if inexperienced opinion, we went on to talk about the impairments and disabilities of patients with serious mental illnesses, their partial responses to combinations of medication and psychological management, and, finally, to the meretricious ideas about their treatment that had been promulgated by contemporary fashion and the anti-psychiatry critics without making an effort to examine patients.

The student wrote his biochemistry paper on emerging concepts of the neurochemistry of mental disorders. He buckled down in medical school, and he came, after graduation, to join me as a resident psychiatrist and eventually proved to be one of the best doctors I ever

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taught. We had overcome something together—all out of going to see a patient, recognizing his burdens, and avoiding assumptions about what fashion said we should find.

A saving grace for any medical theory or practice—the thing that spares it *perpetual* thralldom to the gusty winds of fashion—is the patients. They are real, they are around, and a knowledge of their distressing symptoms guards against oversimplification.

III

The claim that schizophrenic patients are in any sense living an alternative "life style" that our institutions were inhibiting was of course fatuous. It is now obvious to every citizen of our cities that these patients have impaired capacities to comprehend the world and that they need protection and serious active treatment. Without such help, they drift back to precisely the place Dorothea Dix found them 150 years ago.

From the faddish idea of institutions as essentially oppressive emerged a nuance that became more dominant as the 1970s progressed. This was that social custom was itself oppressive. In fact, according to this view, all standards by which behaviors are judged are simply matters of opinion—and emotional opinions at that, likely to be enforced but never justified. In the 1970s, this antinomian idea fueled several psychiatric misdirections.

A challenge to standards can affect at least the discourse in a psychiatric clinic, if not the practice. These challenges are expressed in such slogans as "Do your own thing," "Whose life is it anyway?" "Be sure to get your own," or Joseph Campbell's "Follow your bliss." All of these slogans are familiar to psychiatrists trying to redirect confused, depressed, and often self-belittling patients. Such is their pervasiveness in the culture that they may even divert psychiatrists into misplaced emphases in their understanding of patients.

This interrelationship of cultural antinomianism and a psychiatric misplaced emphasis is seen at its grimmest in the practice known as sex reassignment surgery. I happen to know about this because Johns Hopkins was one of the places in the United States where this practice was given its start. It was part of my intention, when I arrived in Baltimore in 1975, to help end it.

Not uncommonly, a person comes to the clinic and says something like, "As long as I can remember, I've thought I was in the wrong body. True, I've married and had a couple of kids, and I've had a number of homosexual encounters, but always, in the back and now more

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often in the front of my mind, there's this idea that actually I'm more a woman than a man."

When we ask what he has done about this, the man often says, "I've tried dressing like a woman and feel quite comfortable. I've even made myself up and gone out in public. I can get away with it because it's all so natural to me. I'm here because all this male equipment is disgusting to me. I want medical help to change my body: hormone treatments, silicone implants, surgical amputation of my genitalia, and the construction of a vagina. Will you do it?"

The patient claims it is a torture for him to live as a man, especially now that he has read in the newspapers about the possibility of switching surgically to womanhood. Upon examination it is not difficult to identify other mental and personality difficulties in him, but he is primarily disquieted because of his intrusive thoughts that his sex is not a settled issue in his life.

Experts say that "gender identity," a sense of one's own maleness or femaleness, is complicated. They believe that it will emerge through the step-like features of most complex developmental processes in which nature and nurture combine. They venture that, although their research on those born with genital and hormonal abnormalities may not apply to a person with normal bodily structures, something must have gone wrong in this patient's early and formative life to cause him to feel as he does. Why not help him look more like what he says he feels? Our surgeons can do it. What the hell!

The skills of our plastic surgeons, particularly on the genito-urinary system, are impressive. They were obtained, however, not to treat the gender identity problem, but to repair congenital defects, injuries, and the effects of destructive diseases such as cancer in this region of the body.

That you can get something done doesn't always mean that you should do it. In sex reassignment cases, there are so many problems right at the start. The patient's claim that this has been a lifelong problem is seldom checked with others who have known him since childhood. It seems so intrusive and untrusting to discuss the problem with others, even though they might provide a better gage of the seriousness of the problem, how it emerged, its fluctuations of intensity over time, and its connection with other experiences. When you discuss what the patient means by "feeling like a woman," you often get a sex stereotype in return—something that woman physicians note immediately is a male caricature of women's attitudes and interests. One of our patients, for example, said that, as a woman, he would be more "invested with being than with doing."

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It is not obvious how this patient's feeling that he is a woman trapped in a man's body differs from the feeling of a patient with anorexia nervosa that she is obese despite her emaciated, cachectic state. We don't do liposuction on anorexics. Why amputate the genitals of these poor men? Surely, the fault is in the mind not the member.

Yet, if you justify augmenting breasts for women who feel underendowed, why not do it and more for the man who wants to be a woman? A plastic surgeon at Johns Hopkins provided the voice of reality for me on this matter based on his practice and his natural awe at the mystery of the body. One day while we were talking about it, he said to me: "Imagine what it's like to get up at dawn and think about spending the day slashing with a knife at perfectly well-formed organs, because you psychiatrists do not understand what is the problem here but hope surgery may do the poor wretch some good."

The zeal for this sex-change surgery—perhaps, with the exception of frontal lobotomy, the most radical therapy ever encouraged by twentieth-century psychiatrists—did not derive from critical reasoning or thoughtful assessments. These were so faulty that no one holds them up anymore as standards for launching any therapeutic exercise, let alone one so irretrievable as a sex-change operation. The energy came from the fashions of the seventies that invaded the clinic—if you can do it and he wants it, why not do it? It was all tied up with the spirit of doing your thing, following your bliss, an aesthetic that sees diversity as everything and can accept any idea, including that of permanent sex change, as interesting and that views resistance to such ideas as uptight if not oppressive.

Moral matters should have some salience here. These include the waste of human resources; the confusions imposed on society where these men/women insist on acceptance, even in athletic competition, with women; the encouragement of the "illusion of technique," which assumes that the body is like a suit of clothes to be hemmed and stitched to style; and, finally, the ghastliness of the mutilated anatomy.

But lay these strong moral objections aside and consider only that this surgical practice has distracted effort from genuine investigations attempting to find out just what has gone wrong for these people—what has, by their testimony, given them years of torment and psychological distress and prompted them to accept these grim and disfiguring surgical procedures.

We need to know how to prevent such sadness, indeed horror. We have to learn how to manage this condition as a mental disorder when we fail to prevent it. If it depends on child rearing, then let's learn about its inner dynamics so that parents can be taught to guide their

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children properly. If it is an aspect of confusion tied to homosexuality, we need to understand its nature and exactly how to manage it as a manifestation of serious mental disorder among homosexual individuals.

But instead of attempting to learn enough to accomplish these worthy goals, psychiatrists collaborated in an exercise of folly with distressed people during a time when "do your own thing" had something akin to the force of a command. As physicians, psychiatrists, when they give in to this, abandon the role of protecting patients from their symptoms and become little more than technicians working on behalf of a cultural force.

IV

Medical errors of oversimplification and misplaced emphasis usually play themselves out for all to see. But the pure inventions bring out a darker, hateful potential when psychiatric thought goes awry. The invention of entities of mind and then their elaborate description, usually fueled by the energy from some social attitude they amplify, is a recurring event in the history of psychiatry.

Most psychiatric histories choose to describe such invention by detailing its most vivid example—witches. The experience in Salem, Massachusetts, of three hundred years ago is prototypical. Briefly, in 1692, several young women and girls who had for some weeks been secretly listening to tales of spells, voodoo, and illicit cultic practices from a Barbados slave suddenly displayed a set of mystifying mental and behavioral changes. They developed trance-like states, falling on the ground and flailing away, and screaming at night and at prayer, seemingly in great distress and in need of help. The local physician, who witnessed this, was as bewildered as anyone else and eventually made a diagnosis of "bewitchment." "The evil hand is on them," he said and turned them over to the local officials for care.

The clergy and magistrates, regarding the young people as victims and pampering them by showing much attention to their symptoms, assumed that local agents of Satan were at work and, using as grounds the answers to leading questions, indicted several citizens. The accepted proof of guilt was bizarre. The young women spoke of visions of the accused, of sensing their presence at night by pains and torments and of ghostly visitations to their homes, all occurring while the accused were known to be elsewhere. The victims even screeched out in court that they felt pinches and pains provoked by the accused, even while they were sitting quietly across the room. Judges believed

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this "spectral" evidence because it conformed to contemporary thought about the capacities of witches; they dismissed all denials of the accused and promptly executed them.

The whole exercise should have been discredited when, after the executions, there was no change in the distraught behavior of the young women. Instead more and more citizens were indicted. A prosecution depending on "spectral evidence" was at last seen as capricious—as irrefutable as it was undemonstrable. The trials ceased, and eventually several of the young women admitted that their beliefs had been "delusions" and their accusations false.

The modern diagnosis for these young women is, of course, hysteria not bewitchment. Psychiatrists use the term *hysteria* to identify behavioral displays in which physical or mental disorders are imitated. The reasons for the behavior vary with the person displaying the disorder but are derived from that person's more or less unconscious effort to appear more significant to others and to be more entitled to their interest and support. The status of the putatively bewitched in Salem of 1692 brought both attentive concern and the license to indict to young women previously scarcely noticed by the community. The forms of hysterical behavior—whether they be physical activities, such as falling and shaking, or mental phenomena, such as pains, visions, or memories—are shaped by unintended suggestions from others and sustained by the attention of onlookers—especially such onlookers as doctors who are socially empowered to assign, by affixing a diagnosis, the status of "patient" to a person. Whenever these diagnosticians mistake hysteria for what it is attempting to imitate—misidentifying it either as a physical illness or inventing some psychological explanation such as bewitchment—then the behavioral display will continue, expand, and, in certain settings, spread to others. The usual result is trouble for everyone.

During the last seven or eight years, another example of misidentified hysterical behavior has surfaced and again has been bolstered by an invented view of its cause that fits a cultural fashion. This condition is "multiple personality disorder" (MPD, as it has come to be abbreviated). The majority of the patients who eventually receive this diagnosis come to therapists with standard psychiatric complaints, such as depression or difficulty in relationships. Some therapists see much more in these symptoms and suggest to the patient and to others that they represent the subtle actions of several alternative personalities, or "alters," co-existing in the patient's mental life. These suggestions encourage many patients to see their problems in a fresh and, to them, remarkably interesting way. Suddenly they are transformed into odd

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people with repeated shifts of demeanor and deportment that they display on command.

Sexual politics in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly those connected with sexual oppression and victimization, galvanizes these inventions. Forgotten sexual mistreatment in childhood is the most frequently proffered explanation of MPD. Just as an epidemic of bewitchment served to prove the arrival of Satan in Salem, so in our day an epidemic of MPD is used to confirm that a vast number of adults were sexually abused by guardians during their childhood.

Now I don't for a moment deny that children are sometimes victims of sexual abuse, or that a behavioral problem originating from such abuse can be a hidden feature in any life. Such realities are not at issue. What I am concerned with here is what has been imagined from these realities and inventively applied to others.

Adults with MPD, so the theory goes, were assaulted as young children by a trusted and beloved person—usually a father, but grandfathers, uncles, brothers, or others, often abetted by women in their power, are also possibilities. This sexual assault, the theory holds, is blocked from memory (repressed and dissociated) because it was so shocking. This dissociating blockade itself—again according to the theory—destroys the integration of mind and evokes multiple personalities as separate, disconnected, sequestered, "alternative" collections of thought, memory, and feeling. These resultant distinct "personalities" produce a variety of what might seem standard psychiatric symptoms—depression, weight problems, panic states, demoralization, and so forth—that only careful review will reveal to be expressions of MPD that is the outcome of sexual abuse.

These patients have not come to treatment reporting a sexual assault in childhood. Only after therapy has promoted MPD behavior is the possibility that they were sexually abused as children suggested to them. From recollections of the mists of childhood, a vague sense of vulnerability may slowly emerge, facilitated and encouraged by the treating group. This sense of vulnerability is thought a harbinger of clearer memories of victimization that, although buried, have been active for decades producing the different "personalities." The long supposedly forgotten abuse is finally "remembered" after months of "uncovering" therapy, during which long conversations by the therapist with "alter" personalities take place. Any other actual proof of the assault is thought unnecessary. Spectral evidence—developed through suggestions and just as irrefutable as that at Salem—once again is sanctioned.

Like bewitchment from Satan's local agents, the idea of MPD and its cause has caught on among large numbers of psychiatrists and psy-

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chotherapists. Its partisans see the patients as victims, cosset them in groups, encourage more expressions of "alters" (up to as many as eighty or ninety), and are ferocious toward any defenders of those they believe are perpetrators of the abuse. Just as the divines of Massachusetts were convinced that they were fighting Satan by recognizing bewitchment, so the contemporary divines—these are therapists—are confident that they are fighting perpetrators of a common expression of sexual oppression, child abuse, by recognizing MPD.

The incidence of MPD has of late indeed taken on epidemic proportions, particularly in certain treatment centers. Whereas its diagnosis was reported less than two hundred times from a variety of supposed causes in the last century, it has been applied to more than 20,000 people in the last decade and largely attributed to sexual abuse.

I have been involved in direct and indirect ways with five such cases in the past year alone. In every one, the very same story has been played out in a stereotyped script-like way. In each a young woman with a rather straightforward set of psychiatric symptoms—depression and demoralization—sought help and her case was stretched into a diagnosis of MPD. Eventually, in each example, an accusation of prior sexual abuse was leveled by her against her father. The accusation developed after months of therapy, first as vague feelings of a dream-like kind—childhood reminiscences of danger and darkness eventually crystallizing, sometimes "in a flash," into a recollection of father forcing sex upon the patient as a child. No other evidence of these events was presented but the memory, and plenty of refuting testimony, coming from former nursemaids and the mother, was available but dismissed.

On one occasion, the identity of the molester—forgotten for years and now first vaguely and then more surely remembered under the persuasive power of therapy—changed, but the change was as telling about the nature of evidence as was the emergence of the original charge. A woman called her mother to claim that she had come to realize that when she was young she was severely and repeatedly sexually molested by her uncle, the mother's brother. The mother questioned the daughter carefully about the dates and times of these incidents and then set about determining whether they were in fact possible. She soon discovered that her brother was on military service in Korea at the time of the alleged abuse. With this information, the mother went to her daughter with the hope of showing her that her therapist was misleading her in destructive ways. When she heard this new information, the daughter seemed momentarily taken aback, but then said, "I see, Mother. Yes. Well, let me think. If your dates are right, I

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suppose it must have been Dad." And with that, she began to claim that she had been a victim of her father's abusive attentions, and nothing could dissuade her.

The accused men whom I studied, denying the charges and amazed at their source, submitted to detailed reviews of their sexual lives and polygraphic testing to try to prove their innocence and thereby erase doubts about themselves. Professional requests by me to the daughters' therapists for better evidence of the abuse were dismissed as derived from the pleadings of the guilty and scorned as beneath contempt, given that the diagnosis of MPD and the testimony of the patients patently confirmed the assumptions.

In Salem, the conviction depended on how judges thought witches behaved. In our day, the conviction depends on how some therapists think a child's memory of trauma works. In fact, severe traumas are not blocked out by children but remembered all too well. They are amplified in consciousness, remaining like grief to be reborn and reemphasized on anniversaries and in settings that can simulate the environments where they occurred. Good evidence for this is found in the memories of children from concentration camps. More recently, the children of Chowchilla, California, who were kidnapped in their school bus and buried in sand for many hours, remembered every detail of their traumatic experience and need psychiatric assistance, not to bring out forgotten material that was repressed, but to help them move away from a constant ruminative preoccupation with the experience.

Many psychiatrists upon first hearing of these diagnostic formulations (MPD being the result of repressed memories of sexual abuse in childhood) have fallen back upon what they think is an evenhanded way of approaching it. "The mind is very mysterious in its ways," they say. "Anything is possible in a family." In fact, this credulous stance toward evidence and the failure to consider the alternative of hysterical behaviors and memories are what continue to support this crude psychiatric analysis.

The helpful clinical approach to the patient with putative MPD, as with any instance of hysterical display, is to direct attention away from the behavior—one simply never talks to an "alter." Within a few days of a consistent therapeutic emphasis away from the MPD behavior, it fades and generally useful psychotherapy on the presenting true problems begins. Real sexual traumas can be dealt with, if they are present, as can the ambivalent and confused feelings that many adults have about their parents.

Similarly, the proper approach to end epidemics of MPD and the assumptions of a vast prevalence of sexual abuse in ordinary families

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is for psychiatrists to be aware of the potential, whenever we are dealing with hysteria, to mistake it for something else. When it is so mistaken, this can lead to monstrous concepts defended by coincidence, the induction of memories, and a display of "spectral" evidence—all to justify a belief that the community is under siege. This belief, of course, is what releases the power of the witches' court and the lynch mob.

As a corrective, psychiatrists need only review with a patient how the MPD behavior was diagnosed and how the putative memories of sexual abuse were suggested. These practices will eventually be discredited, and this epidemic will end in the same way that the witch trials ended in Salem. But time is passing, many families are being hurt, and confidence in the competence and impartiality of psychiatry is eroding.

V

Major psychiatric misdirections often share this intimidating mixture of a medical mistake lashed to a trendy idea. Any challenge to such a misdirection must confront simultaneously the professional authority of the proponents and the political power of fashionable convictions. Such challenges are not for the fainthearted or inexperienced. They seldom quickly succeed because they are often misrepresented as ignorant or, in the cant word of our day, uncaring. Each of the three misdirections I have dealt with in this essay ran for a full decade, despite vigorous criticism. Eventually the mischief became obvious to nearly everyone and fashion moved on to attach itself to something else.

In ten years much damage can be done and much effort over a longer period of time is required to repair it. Thus with the mentally ill homeless, only a new crusade and social commitment will bring them adequate help again. Age accentuates the sad caricature of the sexual reassigned and saps their bravado. Some, pathetically, ask about re-reassignment. Groups of parents falsely accused of sexual mistreatment by their grown children are gathering together to fight back in ways that will produce dramatic but distressing spectacles. How good it would have been if in the first place all these misguided programs had been avoided or at least their span abbreviated.

Psychiatry, it needs always to be remembered, is a medical discipline—capable of glorious medical triumphs and hideous medical mistakes. We psychiatrists don't know the secret of human nature. We cannot build a New Jerusalem. But we can teach the lessons of our past. We

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can describe how our explanations for mental disorders are devised and develop—where they are strong and where they are vulnerable to misuse. We can clarify the presumptions about what we know and how we know it. We can strive within the traditional responsibilities of our profession to build a sound relationship with people who consult us—placing them on more equal terms with us and encouraging them to approach us as they would any other medical specialists, by asking questions and expecting answers, based on science, about our assumptions, practices, and plans. With effort and good sense, we can construct a clinical discipline that, while delivering less to fashion, will bring more to patients and their families.

Elie Kedourie

1926–1992

Contributor, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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Berlin and Its Counterworlds

RUTH GAY

FOR A LONG TIME I have thought that Berlin has been the best kept secret in Europe. Certainly it is my best kept secret. How does one talk about a visit to the last stop in the history of a sixteen-hundred-year-old community, to the scene of Jewish degradation and defeat? The ordinary vocabulary of travel is useless. Can one say "I had a wonderful time"?

In trying to cope with the feelings that Berlin evokes in me, I began by talking to others. I wrote about those ordinary people with an extraordinary history, Jews who survived the war right in the middle of Berlin, underground or passing or sometimes even legally and openly. I wrote about the post-war Jewish community of Munich—like Berlin's—a new Jewish community of East European origin—brought into being by the accidents of war and politics, attempting to find shape and cohesion on very strange territory. I also wrote about American Jewish prejudice against the old German Jewish community, a prejudice undiminished in force, even a half century after the extinction of the community, when all but the oldest survivors have perished. My own experience seems harder to put into words.

Yet now I have to admit it. When I am in Berlin—and I have been often in Berlin over the last two decades—I have a very good time. And it is not just because it is the most interesting city in Europe. But what always makes me catch my breath when I'm in Berlin is the feeling that I'm back in the New York that I knew in the 1920s and 1930s. What catches me up are the look of the residential neighborhoods and the familiar old patterns of daily life, where one smells soup cooking in the morning for the midday dinner. Unlike New York today, it is not a fortress in which one works and from which one flees at five o'clock. It has a real downtown, varied outlying residential neighborhoods, and a grand main avenue—the Kurfürstendamm—where people come simply to stroll of an evening or enjoy the street life from the vantage

✪ RUTH GAY's book *The Jews of Germany: A Historical Portrait* has just been published by Yale University Press. Her essays have appeared in *Commentary*, *Dialogue*, *Horizon*, and other magazines.

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point of a sidewalk café. The Grand Concourse in the Bronx or Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn had no cafés, but they were also broad avenues with parklike dividers that brought out the multitudes for an evening or Sabbath stroll.

Berlin's very location, in the old days of a divided Germany, sent prickles of excitement up one's spine as one's plane circled the barracks-like housing of East Berlin before coming to rest in a glittering island of the West. Cosseted and pampered by the Federal German government as the glamorous showcase of Western civilization, displaying the benefits of capitalism in an Eastern sea, it was, as the Berliners said sardonically, "the kept woman of Bonn." And at the same time—before November 1989—with a few steps across the wall, one was plunged into all the decay, corruption, and misery of Eastern Europe. East Berlin was a place into which one was not permitted to take a newspaper, a map, or even a calendar.

When we visited friends we took coffee, fruit, and, urgently, baby diapers. So there it was, two systems, two worlds peering at one another across a narrow divide, all encompassable in a day's visit. In the old days before November 1989, as our friends, the recipients of the coffee, fruit, and Pampers, escorted us to Checkpoint Charlie at midnight, they would glance through the arch of the Brandenburg Gate toward the lights of the West. "Will we ever see it in our lifetime?" they would ask. This always produced a knot of rage in my stomach, as I thought of these young people, forever prisoners of their regime. And for our part, when visitors came to West Berlin, we would take them to a platform on which one looked through the Brandenburg Gate into the East, the same platform on which John F. Kennedy had once stood, to see the infamous, graffiti-covered wall, the barbed wire, the sinister abandoned houses along the border and the watchtowers, actively manned by East German soldiers, young and stony-faced, dressed in odd, blouse-topped uniforms, open at the neck, that made them look more like busboys than crack troops. But they were deadly enough. What one did not see from the platform was the death strip (the *Todesstreifen*), a stretch of sand on the eastern side of the wall, guarded by men under orders to shoot to kill or by machine guns automatically activated by trip wires.

Crossing at Checkpoint Charlie, the hopeful tourist experienced, however briefly, what it was like to be in the power of that regime. The visitor was sluiced through a series of dingy rooms, the windows hung with the inevitable lace curtains of East German bureaucracy. But no signs were posted; there was no indication of what was expected or of how to accomplish the transition from West to East. Appli-

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cants quickly learned, like newly arrived prisoners, by close observation and without talking, how to get forms, where to surrender that precious Western passport and wait for its return, where to make the obligatory exchange of money at the outrageous rate of one East mark to one West. All under the basilisk stares of teenaged guards, male and female, who breathed the fanaticism of the Young Pioneers. And then with a one-day visa in hand, the newly empowered tourist was out on the street, facing a broad and desolate Friedrichstrasse, the buildings still pock-marked with the bullet holes of the Battle for Berlin and the roadway in a perpetual state of excavation—a six-lane street, not a taxi to be seen, no bus, no trolley, and hardly a car. What was eerie about the old East was the silence. Nothing seemed to move. In the midst of a great city, people whispered to each other, if they spoke at all. In fact, after the wall came down, and East Berliners mingled in the cafés and on the sidewalks of the West, they were unmistakable for a long time by their habit of voiceless communication. Even standing crushed against a couple in a crowded trolley car, one could not hear what they were saying. One sunny Sunday, the summer after the wall fell, I was dallying over coffee in a suburban café, where the tables were charmingly set in embrasures of boxwood hedges. A young couple came in and sat down at a table that backed onto a low wall topped by a hedge. As they turned to one another to speak, the girl's hand automatically flew up to her mouth, a telltale gesture from the East. Like prisoners let out of jail, they retained for a long time the self-protective habits of their former life.

After the war, Berlin went through one metamorphosis after another, as it stumbled forward into the benefits of democracy. But the fear of the Russians remained constant, fed by the remembrance of the Russians' ruthlessness in the battle for Berlin, as they became masters of the city. The 1948 blockade, broken after nearly a year and a half by the American airlift, only confirmed the fear, and, although the menace subsided in the succeeding decades, the fear remained. The wall, which went up with lightning speed on August 13, 1961, creating a scar across the city, in certain ways stabilized the situation by physically defining it. In the past, people had lived in the East and worked in the West, or they took a train across the line to go to the university or theater or to visit family. The wall cut off contact and stiffened the lines of difference. While the sixties brought rigidity to the East, it brought turbulence to the West as university students in Berlin and elsewhere erupted in revolt against their parents, that silent generation whom they accused of complicity with the Nazis, against the university system and its authoritarian ways, against middle-class morality, against bourgeois habits and possessions.

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They drew the framework for their resentments from the radical parties that offered global solutions to injustice and abandoned their studies for the pleasure of self-expression.

Berlin was, and remains, an intensely political city. Well into the seventies those who lived in West Berlin felt themselves to be the endangered outpost of democracy. And they lived there cautiously. It was a place to go for one's university years, when young men were rewarded by being exempted from military service. On the campus, in the radical sixties, there were literally dozens of political parties representing every shade, every nuance of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist deviation. Nor did they confine their politics to the university grounds. With any provocation or none at all, they were out marching on the Kurfürstendamm. For many students, their university years in Berlin represented that interlude of irresponsibility, masked by activism, that separated them from the adult obligations to come. But as soon as young families had children, the game was over. They thought of finding jobs in "West Germany," or the breadwinner, generally the man, established his family in the West and commuted to his job in Berlin.

After the excitement of the sixties has subsided, and the young radicals began to settle quietly into German prosperity, Berlin underwent yet another metamorphosis. Berliners no longer worried about every extra Russian soldier stationed at the Russian war memorial in the Tiergarten or anguished over how long every Russian closure of the checkpoints would last. Since the Russians controlled the land corridors that led across East Germany to Berlin, they had not hesitated to slow down the movement at the checkpoints, or close them entirely at unexpected and entirely arbitrary moments. What Berliners dreaded above all was a Russian takeover, for which they had a variety of scenarios. In the most prevalent, the Russians created an incident in the West and then sent in their troops—as one of the four occupying powers—effectively taking over the city. Or there was the version of the lady from whom I bought my morning rolls: "They will come," she said one day as she handed me my change, "they will come on the elevated trains, and suddenly they will be here in the midst of the city, and it will be theirs."

But the Russians abandoned their games about opening and closing the checkpoints; the long-distance trains that ran under East German auspices, dirty and shabby as they were, came in on time; and an elegant little airport was opened at Tegel, twenty minutes from the center of town, under West power auspices, making air connection with the West easy and pleasant. But . . . there were always the reminders. If you didn't make the 6:45 plane on Sunday night, there was nothing

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until Monday morning. It was still a beleaguered city, under four-power governance, but the atmosphere even there was visibly loosening. Pensioners in the East, for example, were granted thirty days of travel in the West each year, and then in the eighties even the young, one family member at a time, the rest remaining hostages at home, could apply to visit heretofore-forgotten Aunt Hede on her eightieth birthday.

There were several levels of outrage, therefore, that lay in wait for a visitor to Berlin: the outrage at the present, or at the regime in the East that brought daily misery, ignorance, and humiliation to seventeen million people living under the tyrants who ruled in the name of socialism; and the outrage at the Nazi past, which cropped up unexpectedly, suddenly darkening the day. One is not unprepared perhaps to see a menorah in a flea market, although inevitably one wonders about its history. But sometimes one is caught off balance, such as the afternoon while waiting at a bus stop when I fell into conversation with an elderly lady, a sister in a nursing order. Apropos of my American accent she told me that she had studied English as a young girl in the 1920s and had fond memories of her teacher, a Fräulein Friedländer. This unmistakably Jewish name set off warning bells in my mind. "What happened," I wondered, hardly hearing any longer what the sister had to say, "What happened to Fräulein Friedländer?" So one stands on the sunny street waiting for the bus that is due in exactly two minutes, feeling quite lost and alone.

And here, of course, we come to the heart of the matter. Perhaps the remark of an acquaintance best sums it up. When I told him that I was going to Berlin for the summer, he responded with wonder: "Why would you want to do that?" Germany, despite the best efforts of its travel agencies, and posters of fairy-tale castles, is not an American tourist goal. It does not evoke the romance of April in Paris, or a honeymoon in Venice. The last good war has left terrible memories, and nearly half a century afterward, when those who lived through it are quite old, the images remain, helped, of course, by the voluminous records, pictures, files, and private memoirs. For American Jews it is a memory redoubled—it is not only the war, but the massacre of the six million in the camps.

This fact, intractable, enormous, and searing, also brings rational thought to a standstill. It reminds me of my childhood days during the High Holy Days, when my parents would go to Yizkor (the services to remember the dead), from which we children were excluded, and would emerge to our wonder with reddened eyes as they recollected parents whom they had left decades before and whom we had never seen. For most American Jews there are many Yizkors during the year, occasions—secular or religious—in which those murdered by the Nazis are remembered. And it is this permanent lump in the throat that makes us turn

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our head away at the sound of the German language and never even think of going to Germany. "Why would you want to do that?"

And yet, if we stop there, if we remain frozen in this grief, we have locked ourselves into our past and have lost the present and future. It is easy to be categorical: to hate Wagner, to refuse to buy a German car, to reject a people, and in doing so to bathe in the fellowship of like-minded Jews. At a recent meeting to discuss a new book about Berlin, sponsored by the local Hillel chapter where I live, a university scientist stood up to tell a story. He was himself from Israel, a long-time resident of the United States, and in the course of his work had come to know a visiting German scientist. When, after many years of acquaintanceship, he went to Berlin for the first time, his German friend gave him a map of the city with places of Jewish interest carefully marked—the major cemetery, the various synagogues, the Jewish museum, etc. The Israeli reported that he looked at the map, turned to the German scientist and asked, "And where are the Nazi monuments?" This rather nasty question was received with a murmur of pleasure by the audience.

Such stories, under such circumstances, do not serve rational discourse, but they bind people together in their old hatreds. A young German student, also in the audience, stood up during the meeting to say that he was already the second generation after the war, and that both he and his parents wrestled with the sense of responsibility and guilt that was the legacy of their birth. But it was like throwing a stone into a well. It made, in fact, even less of a splash. So while Jews tend to see only the faces of Nazis when they look at Germans, many Germans, like this student, look upon Jews with a strange combination of wonder and guilt, and with a grieving sense that they are beholding a lost national treasure. These are not exactly symmetrical postures and can only lead to exasperation on both sides.

It was against this emotional background that I first came to visit Berlin in the 1970s and somehow it is impossible to speak of Berlin as if one were oblivious to its history. Because even when Germans are not thinking about Jews, the Nazi past and their place in the comity of nations preoccupies them. Another incident out of daily life. One summer evening, I was delighted to find a parking spot practically in front of my apartment building in an outlying part of Berlin. As I locked up and was about to leave, an elderly man walking with two women came by, stopped, and pointed out that my ideal spot might, in fact, be illegal, since there was a road that led off from the opposite side of the street. This was such a remote possibility that I shrugged and was about to walk off when he persisted, and his companions began to remonstrate

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with him. But he defended himself. "*They*," he said, "always accuse us of not taking responsibility. Now I want to say what is right." Out of the blue, seemingly, but clearly out of some deeply felt sense of his past, came this association to the Nuremberg trials. Like little volcanic eruptions, such incidents and references became part of one's daily experience. And while Germans reproach themselves for not having conquered their past, they certainly live with it like an open wound.

I hasten to say that my own sampling of German life was pretty well restricted to academics, artists, intellectuals, with perhaps a few business people, as garnish—not exactly a cross-section—but enough over the years to teach me to listen to them and to hear their stories. Visiting Berlin in the seventies and eighties was not like those uncomfortable years just after the war when one pondered the faces of those one met. The post-war generations, as I learned, struggled with their burden in a variety of ways. When I once complimented a friend on his flawless, upper-class English, he told me: "People of my generation worked to perfect their foreign languages. They didn't want to be detected as Germans when they went abroad." And it was not uncommon among those who spoke less well, or spoke no foreign language, to come back from a vacation and report with relief that they had been well treated abroad "even though we are Germans." Few tourists, in turn, can approach Berlin with the same ingenuousness that they bring to Paris or Venice. There are feelings that need to be settled before the visitor can even begin to see the city, hear the voices around him, and begin to take in the atmosphere. If one looks even at technical treatises about Germany, they often begin with an autobiographical note in which the author reveals his struggles with himself as he first contemplated this emotionally complex assignment. And I am, of course, writing my own confession, since I really want to write about Berlin. But there is no way of doing it without first piercing the penumbra of emotion that surrounds it. When I finally stopped thinking about myself and looked about, I found a great deal that was enjoyable and admirable.

What was always particular to Berlin was the acute sensitivity to politics. Every ripple across the border of the divided city, every newspaper story about East-West relations had an immediate effect on people's plans—and, more durably, on their morale. What everyone feared was the unpredictable Russian. (Berliners always referred to them in the singular—der Russe—a personification that made them even more menacing.) Crossing the "Zone," as old-time Berliners called that part of East Germany between themselves and the West, was a tense experience. There travelers were exposed to the vagaries and whims of the Soviet

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surrogates, the implacable East German police. Signs posted at intervals told the driver not to stop, not to get off the marked road, and it was very unpleasant, and costly, if one ran out of gas or had a breakdown. It was no wonder that, after clearing the checkpoint in the West, travelers stormed the four telephones at the border station to let their friends and family know: "Wir sind durch!" ("We've gotten through!") It was no small matter. Some made elaborate preparations for eventualities. People could wait for hours at the western border if the Russians closed the transit lanes to Berlin, as they periodically decided to do. As we sat in line on one of these occasions, we noticed that the people in the English car ahead of us, evidently experienced travelers, had prudently brought along a kettle that could be plugged into the cigarette lighter on the dashboard of their Jaguar. They calmly whiled away their captivity with an elegant tea party, while the rest of us stood about staring at the unmoving lace curtains of the border guard's windows.

But as Soviet arbitrariness subsided, as people realized that they could reliably get in and out of the city, Berlin began to seem less like a fortress and more like a pleasure garden. It was a sensation sharpened by the contrast with its all too visible twin. In the summer, when Berliners swam or boated on the Havel and Spree, they confined themselves to the halves of the rivers that were "West" while the enforced emptiness of the eastern half of the waters only enhanced the gaiety of the brightly colored boats darting about in the sun. On the streets, the cafés and restaurants expanded onto the sidewalks, where people could be found at any hour of the day and into the early hours of the morning, talking, drinking, and eating under lanterns and strings of lights. When I came back from East Berlin at midnight on the bus that went from Checkpoint Charlie to the Kurfürstendamm, the contrast between the dark and silent East Berlin I had left with the gregarious scene before me only increased my indignation at the enforced cheerlessness of life in the East.

I am a lover of cities, and most Americans do not love them. We use them up, move on, and abandon them to decay. Something in the American psyche is antithetical to great hives of people. It does not dote on its urban past; it does not wax sentimental about old water towers, nor does it prize city life. The ideal, alas, is the Marlboro man riding, riding alone into a wilderness. Families take it as a point of pride and strength when they say "We're loners." It is an idea that is profoundly alien to me—as one who grew up in the intense conviviality of a Jewish immigrant community in the Bronx. There silence in conversation was

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not perceived as a sign of superb and superior detachment, but rather as a sign of inadequacy.

In that world, in which prowess was not demonstrated on the tennis court or the ski slope, where survival rather than money-making was the most that one could hope for, the well-turned phrase, the well-told story played an immense role in establishing presence, in knitting up the strands of kinship in commenting on the vagaries of human life, all the while reverberating with moral lessons. The main lesson that I absorbed growing up was that civilization meant people, and socialization was its highest form. After the war, when some of the survivors of the Nazi death camps were admitted to the United States, I met a newly discovered relative who had fled east from Warsaw in 1939 and had been interned for his pains by the Russians in a penal logging camp above the Arctic circle, in Archangel, for the entire war. As an electrician, he had devised ingenious, and illegal, ways of getting light into his barracks and described the various devices he and his fellow prisoners had used to outwit their captors and make their lives more bearable. Yet at the end of his tale, he shrugged and said, "But one can't do business with trees."

In Berlin there are now beautiful trees. When the war was over, 80 percent of the city lay in rubble. Whatever trees had survived the bombing and fires had been cut down for firewood, and the inhabitants had an unobstructed view for miles across the devastated streets. In the West, the government planted sturdy, city-loving linden trees along the main boulevards; it built fountains, landscaped roadways, established pocket-sized parks at intersections and larger ones with playgrounds in neighborhoods. Now in the summer, when one rides the double-decker buses, the overhanging boughs brush against the roof of the bus. Cafés take advantage of the shade and coolness of these trees, now nearly half a century old. Like the mimosa that marks the cities of southern France, the linden is the signature of Berlin, its blossoms perfuming the air in the spring, just as the downward spiral of its winged seed pods are the first sign of fall.

Berlin—and I mean the former West Berlin—is a scruffy city by German standards, without the perfection and polish of Munich, Hamburg, or Frankfurt, whose streets, public transportation systems, shopping boulevards, and open markets show how city life can be made a pleasure. But even scruffy Berlin works. Its underground and elevated trains and buses run frequently, on time, and apart from some recent outbreaks of graffiti, are well-kept and comfortable. There are no turnstiles in the subway, and passengers either have a subscription, renewable monthly, or they can buy individual tickets that need to be validated by a machine stamp.

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But one can ride for months on the system without being challenged. On the occasions when the inspectors board the trains and buses to check the tickets, it is astonishing how few culprits they turn up to pay the 60DM fine (about $35) in a system that is so easy to beat. Compared with the almost routine turnstile jumping in New York, it is a reminder to me of a society that still works according to commonly accepted rules.

It is this sense of consensus and awareness of a common rhythm to life that moves me back in time to the 1920s and 1930s in New York City. Like New York then, Berlin now is filled with neighborhoods of five- and six-story apartment buildings, many of them of exactly that pre–World War I vintage, if not the size, that still line West End Avenue, with a similar feeling to the scale and disposition of space, with a similar insistence on handsome bathrooms and kitchens intended for serious family cooking. In the first years after the war, the rubble of Berlin was removed by the heroic labor of the Trümmerfrauen, women who with their bare hands moved tons of rocks and bricks to newly created hills and made possible the reconstruction of the city. What happened at first was the restoration of the houses as they stood: the street grid remained and the houses, which were largely of brick with painted stucco facades, were renovated as quickly as possible. But in the old Palladian manner, the stucco in the original Berlin houses had been artfully polished and incised to suggest great blocks of stone, and the windows had been surrounded by elaborate moldings, sometimes embellished with caryatids, grotesque heads, and other ornamentation.

In the haste—and also in the fury—of the post-war years to wipe out the past, the new facades were ripped down to bare, roughly finished stucco and painted a utilitarian buff or gray. But what the anti-historical rage for simplicity and modernity produced was depressing streets and housing that quickly grew dirty and dingy. In the 1970s the city fathers caught their breath and looked about—and with a nod to postmodernism, a new era broke over Berlin. One summer, on the busiest part of the Kurfürstendamm, the population was confronted with an array of new street furniture—lamps and benches—and asked to vote. The party of nostalgia won with ornate Wilhelminian street lamps now towering gracefully over the trees, seamlessly closing over twelve Nazi years. The facades were next as the city planners began to retrieve or reconstruct the old window frames, the gargoyles, swags of fruit and flowers, fountains, and other ornaments from the original architectural drawings. But in the new post-war world, the colors turned Mediterranean, and suddenly pinks and greens covered the stucco, which no longer pretended to be stone.

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Pink and green stucco surely did not line the streets of the Bronx where I grew up. But five-story buildings did, as well as the occasional tree on the streets, and a neighborhood with stores that reflected their customers' way of life: the kosher butcher, the bakery, the appetizing store that sold smoked fish, the delicatessen that sold smoked meats, the dairy that sold eggs, butter (cut to order from great standing blocks), sour cream by the measure, and the delicate kosher cheeses. There were also the shoemaker, the news dealer, the pharmacist—all in an era before discount chains and fast-food outlets had honed shopping into a desert of international uniformity. In many neighborhoods in Berlin such clusters still exist, and it was in Berlin that I saw again, after many decades, the great blocks of butter, each order cut and pounded into an artful shape with rilled paddles. Here, too, the stores bear their owner's name and their owner's personality, creating, as it were, a thousand villages in the metropolis.

Berlin, before the wall came down, was not only for me a reminder of earlier times. Looking back at it now, Berliners, too, speak of it as an "idyll" when they lived their isolated but protected lives, and when an older tempo prevailed. Even as half a city, Berlin was huge, as big as Munich, Stuttgart, and Frankfurt am Main combined, and in its diversity it was like one of those eighteenth-century vest-pocket princely states. It had its farming region in the north, its outlying manufacturing suburb, its museums, parks, and boulevards, as well as its wood, the Grunewald, in the south. And as a modern city, it had its Turkish slums, its drug dealers at the railroad station, and the prostitutes who came out at night on the Kurfürstendamm. But as one of my friends said before the liberation of 1989, "By now, I know every path in the Grunewald." To cope with this claustrophobia, people built garden colonies to which they escaped on the weekend. Made up of minute plots of land, they were a nineteenth-century idea, originally intended as vegetable gardens for the city proletariat. In post-war Berlin, they became the locus of the wildest horticultural fantasy. In areas no larger than a modest living room, one saw a miniature Versailles, or the sweet disorder of an English garden, or an entire fruit orchard bordered with a topiary hedge. In the central Bronx where I grew up, there was a substantial Italian population who lived side by side with the Jews and grew restive with the concrete. They also bought plots of land in remote parts of the borough to establish a bit of home. They grew grapes on pergolas and vegetables on the adjoining lots. On Sunday afternoons, one could see whole families enjoying dinner in the shade of their vine. And during the hard days of Prohibition, these families, quite legally, made wine in September from the grapes that had shaded them in July.

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These fused images have permeated my experience of Berlin, making me feel that I had stepped back into my past and was living at a pace and in a style that has long since vanished from my real world. Now the Berliners feel it, too, as contemporary problems have literally come crashing through the old broken barriers. Gypsy families from Romania are encamped around the Reichstag and begging on the Kurfürstendamm; the Kurdish population of Berlin is marching on the same Kurfürstendamm, protesting the brutality of Turkey and Iraq; the Yugoslav fraternal clubs are breaking apart into hostile national factions, and bus loads of Poles line up at the stores nearest the railroad station to buy food and electronics for resale in Poland. The Vietnamese slave laborers, brought to East Germany in their thousands by the Honecker regime, linger on in the face of open hostility and also come to West Berlin to shop and stare. West Berliners are no longer alone. Living politics, both present and past, now dominate the streets. The legacy of Communist misrule is perhaps the most visible element, but the Nazi years are never very far behind.

It is a past that never slumbers, in the memory of the Germans, among Jews everywhere and in the hearts of all those people of Europe who endured the Nazi hegemony. But its resolution takes place on many levels. It is easiest for governments to talk to one another. While German-Jewish survivors were still debating amongst themselves in 1952 about whether it was morally permissible to accept restitution money from the West German government, the state of Israel was already negotiating the terms and preparing to exchange ambassadors. For individuals, the matter is thornier. Conditions of state do not match states of mind. One can understand if those who survived the camps never want to hear a word of German again. But is it not presumptuous on the part of us who were elsewhere or perhaps not yet born to mirror their behavior? It may appear like solidarity, but in actuality are we not putting on a cloak that does not belong to us? I think that we lucky ones, who did not come under the Nazi terror, have a different history and a different agenda. Above all, I am troubled by the self-satisfaction of those who had no part in the sufferings of the war and their relish of their hostility to Germans.

In 1985 Peter Sichrovsky, an Austrian journalist now living in Berlin, published a book of interviews with Jews living in Germany and Austria. What is telling about these are the variety of "solutions" that his subjects come to. His own father, who survived by being hidden in Berlin, strikes his son in a fury when Sichrovsky denounces the Germans as "garbage." If they were "garbage," he says, your mother and I would not

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be standing here today. Never forget that." Another man, a doctor, the son of survivors, living comfortably in Vienna with a non-Jewish woman who has borne him a child, records his gradual withdrawal and mistrust of the entire non-Jewish world and lives with a fantasy that one day he will have to flee for his life, leaving his child and its mother behind. They will be safe alone, he thinks, because they are not Jewish. But for him it is only a matter of time.

These poles of expression with many variations are echoed by others who were never victims. But the reflex of fear and the pleasure of hatred runs deep in us, and they are not easy to set aside. It is enough to be even a descendant of one of those who participated in this dance of death, and we find our parts waiting for us.

It is no wonder that German uneasiness in the world continues two generations after the war. Abroad they still prefer to speak English, a disguise that fools no one; nor does it allay that involuntary but inescapable response of withdrawal (I mention only the mildest emotion) that overcomes other Europeans in their presence. German consciousness of world dislike is so ingrained that one is not surprised to hear a TV announcer at an international soccer game in Madrid murmuring to his German audience how "pleasant it is that the German team is not being whistled down." I tremble sometimes when I think of my German friends, whose history I know, when they venture abroad: the woman whose father was hanged in April 1945 because he was a member of the Bonhoeffer resistance group; the doctor, born in 1930, whose parents claimed that he was mentally retarded in order to keep him out of the schools and the Hitler Youth; the German leftist who risked being shot rather than serve in Hitler's army by malingering and then maiming himself during the last two years of the war. Abroad they are simply "Germans," and they cannot be certain how they will be received.

At home, however, amongst themselves, the uncertainty vanishes, and I see them there not through the eyes of others but as they are. In Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich, places not yet disfigured by the hordes of tourists who have transformed Amsterdam or Florence into catering establishments with monuments attached, they have built livable modern cities where families and people of modest means continue to find pleasant housing that they can afford. I might add, parenthetically, that it was in the former East Germany that the regime built Potemkin villages to the greater glory of the regime while the workers made do with the crumbling remains of war-damaged housing or were shoved into soulless, prefabricated apartment blocks.

In Weimar, with the money-making shrines of Goethe and Schiller to be exploited, their respective houses were beautifully restored, and a

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few exorbitantly priced hotel rooms were provided for tourists with hard currency, but two streets away from the charming promenade, one was transported from eighteenth-century elegance to the wretchedness of East German housing. In 1987, to honor the 750th anniversary of the founding of Berlin, the city government in the East built an entire fantasy quarter with real houses in wrong places. The Nikolai Viertel, as it was named for the church in whose shadow it stood, had Fontane's apothecary shop, a Heine house, the Zum Nussbaum coffeehouse, all originally elsewhere, their counterfeits assembled helter-skelter to form a newly picturesque shopping and strolling area for the benefit of unwary visitors and to the bewilderment of old Berliners. But one look around the back of the Ephraim Palais, built originally by an eighteenth-century Jewish financier and here reconstituted, and one sees the telltale concrete plates of East German prefabricated building, the seams carefully covered over only on the street side with yellow-painted stucco. While pretense and pretension were the strong suits of the old East German government, what seems to be the hallmark of life in West Germany is its authenticity. Coming from our throwaway society, I find myself plunged into a counterworld in which the demand for quality and durability do not run against the stream.

It is a world marked by regularity and rhythm, where you cannot rush out and buy shampoo at 3:00 in the morning, but where you can buy breakfast rolls at 6:30 or 7:00 A.M. It is also a world of intensely self-conscious domesticity. Even in the personals columns that appear in the weekend editions of the newspapers, domesticity appears right up with the other popular attributes. At the moment the rigorously uniform store closing times are the subject of intense debate. They now shut in the evening at 6:00 and on Saturdays at 1:00, except for the first Saturday in the month, when they are open all afternoon. I need not rehearse here all the usual arguments for and against. And it does add a certain tension to Saturdays because you know that after 1:00 P.M. there is not a lemon to be had in all of Berlin until Monday morning. There is, however, one exception that legally opens selected doors even on Sunday—the sacred coffee hour at 4:00 P.M. In order to cope with this national emergency, the bake shops are open from 2:00 to 4:00 on Sunday afternoons to supply cake and pastry. In fact, one of the standard sights on Berlin buses on Sunday afternoons are people carrying bouquets of flowers to their hostesses.

What we are talking about is ceremony, which colors and shapes German life and creates those islands of repose that are missing from our own more ad hoc way of managing. In the coffee hour, for example,

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we all have our parts and know how to play them. The guest arrives—promptly—with a small bouquet in hand. As he rings the doorbell, he rips the paper off the bouquet and presents the naked flowers. The illusion fondly cultivated in the big city is that they have been cut from the guest's own garden. Upon accepting the bouquet, the hostess will wordlessly take the crumpled paper along with the flowers and place them in a waiting vase. Now this seems elaborate. It was certainly baffling to me the first few times I saw it. Now I find that these rituals give dignity and style to an everyday event. But we have left our visitor standing on the threshold. He is led into the living room where the coffee (or tea) table has already been laid, and it may be simple or elaborate, but someone has given it some thought and taken some trouble. The point is that there is a sense at these coffee hours of having reached an oasis, and in winter, as the room darkens and candles are lit, the impression deepens as does the conversation.

In this leisurely world, friendships among women play themselves out in rather different venues from their counterparts in the United States. With fewer middle-class women working, they have time to see one another in the middle of the day, and not just during a hurried lunch hour. One of my cherished Berlin memories is of what I called my Revolutionary Embroidery Group, an "interest group" of the German American Women's Federation. Although the Federation itself had started under American occupation just after the war as a way of creating understanding between the occupiers and the local population, it quickly took on a life of its own with branches wherever there were significant American bases. In most places, these clubs rapidly developed a country-club atmosphere, its members made up of the wives of American officers and the wives of German businessmen. In Berlin it was different. Drawing upon a wider pool, the branch there turned the relationship upside down. There it was the vanquished coming to the assistance of the victors. The German members in Berlin, who were accepted only if they spoke English, joined out of a sense of noblesse oblige, wanting to help the lonely and rather lost wives of ordinary American servicemen living in their isolated housing at the edge of the city. Without the efforts of the women in the club, many of these Americans would have never encountered a German or been invited to a German home. In Berlin hundreds of American women joined—so many, in fact, that they organized a variety of groups to cope with the range of talents and backgrounds: a reading circle, a current affairs discussion group, embroidery, cooking, etc. I joined where my friends were—the embroidery group—and noticed at once that while a single American was present, the language was English. We met each week in

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a different house, sitting around the dining room table with our work. And while the hostess laid out coffee and cookies, we were all presumably hurrying home at noon to prepare midday dinner at 1:00 or 1:30, when German children come home from school and some German husbands still come home for their midday meal.

What I found here was a respect for handiwork and accomplishment at a very high level. None of the German ladies embroidered on stamped goods, but counted stitches on fine linen, working from a diagram. The words *easy, fast, fun*, which infantilize the readers of American homemaking magazines, were simply not part of their vocabulary. Here what counted was the complexity of the technique, the refinement of the accomplishment, the taste in color and design. One of my friends in the group had spent the entire spring learning to do drawn work under the tutelage of our doyenne and was proud to exhibit her single but exquisitely and intricately patterned napkin at the end of the season. There is a powerful sense of self-respect in this attitude toward work and an esteem for competence.

During most of the year, the members brought their own projects to the meetings, but during the summer the German ladies worked on pieces to be sold at a bazaar to raise money for a children's home in East Berlin. These were middle-class women, the wives of businessmen, academics, professional men, themselves university-educated, who with complete unself-consciousness were practicing a very old-fashioned kind of direct charity. They—or one of their number—had come upon this children's home in the first few months after the opening of the wall and they were appalled by the conditions they saw. Disabled, disturbed children were not really recognized in the old socialist state, and they were hidden away under bleak conditions to survive as best they might. I admired both the tact and the energy with which these women took up their cause, as well as their effectiveness. One of the women, for example, had gone to a big Berlin carpet house and persuaded the owner to donate the necessary carpeting for the home. I was learning something on these Monday mornings about their code, about the standards that they set for themselves, about how they saw the world, and it was all eerily familiar. They valued one another, cherishing weaknesses and strengths. They valued housekeeping as an art and knew how to appreciate one another's accomplishments. These are old ideals, and since the fifties we have been wary of them, fearful that they are bought at too high a price, at the cost of women's independence and self-realization. To experience them again, today, gives me a sense of living in a time warp—a time when women were knowledgeable and secure in the household arts and enjoying them. They do not feel that it diminishes

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them to know how to remove spots from linen, how to make a bed, how to set a beautiful table. Their counterparts in America have only been able to legitimize these activities afresh, in the new egalitarian world, when they have been able to get men to participate. Cooking becomes creative and interesting, because men have crossed the threshold, not as semi-comical weekend barbecue chefs, but as knowledgeable workmen in the kitchen.

When I first met the grande dame of our group, a lady in her sixties, at a party in Berlin, I took her for an Englishwoman. As I later learned, she came from a Dresden family, had had an English governess as a child, and spoke the language perfectly. She was well educated, had married into nobility—the modest, working nobility—and maintained a deliciously satirical view of the conventions and formulas of German society. It did not prevent her from being immensely accomplished in all branches of housekeeping—how to winter over geraniums, make jams and jellies, care for silver, how to arrange a christening or a wedding, but all with that touch of irony that made it clear that we were in a post-war epoch where the perfectly ironed linen napkin with the crest visible in the left-hand corner was a game now played for entertainment alone. Among her political credentials was the fact that there is now a plaque on her father-in-law's house, marking it as the site where the Stauffenberg group met to plot their unsuccessful attempt on Hitler's life in July 1944.

What about those others, those who didn't have what is now wryly called "the obligatory Jewish grandmother" or the stainless wartime record? What about those who had Nazi parents or grandparents? This is what is so mysterious. Apart from the occasional report of a reunion of an old SS group, there is silence, the maddening silence that drove the sixties generation of university students into revolt. A great deal of ink has been spilt over the inability of the Germans to confront and conquer that past. They chose another way—a plunge into work and into building quite literally a new world, which was easier than confronting the Nazi epoch. One of the wonders of this much-documented age is how little we have in the way of memoirs or introspective recollection of those days by those who were the enthusiastic supporters of the regime. Where are they, one wonders, as one contemplates old photographs showing squares filled with a hundred thousand jubilant, cheering citizens.

By now, of course, most of them have died. But in their lifetimes, they withdrew rather than speak. A handful have been coaxed by skillful interviewers to describe what swept them away—and there is an orgiastic element in all these accounts. Some few have been etched in the acid

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prose of Bernt Engelmann or more insidiously in the novels of Walter Kempowski who is able to turn banal rapture over Bruckner in a 1920s post-concert conversation into a sinister prefiguration of the Nazis. And the answers that he published in his two books, *Did You Ever See Hitler?* and *Did You Know About It?* give us the wildly varying attitudes that one would expect from his several hundred subjects. Some of the old believers live with a defiance that tenaciously defends the past, but they take care to temper what they say aloud in a new Germany. Others cling to shreds of the Nazi ideology, disbelieving and filled with conflict about its horrendous consequences.

If we ask, with our Israeli scientist, where are the monuments to the Nazis, the answer is that they are inscribed in the hearts and minds of those who remain. But what is written there is largely indecipherable. For their descendants it is a period of German history that they struggle to understand and expiate. Those who were the victims have also been pursued by interviewers, or have themselves come forward to tell their stories. And they, too, waited a long time to begin. In Berlin there are sometimes bizarre conjunctions—the former SS man who converted to Judaism and has now become a devoted member of one of the congregations.

One specter lurks, though, always in the background—the camps. In every country occupied by the Nazis, there is a reckoning to this day of those who collaborated and those who resisted or went underground or were imprisoned or killed. And their descendants continue to struggle with the legacy that their parents or grandparents left them. What awakens that past unforgettably are the individual incidents: the family denounced by a covetous neighbor, and the brothers separated on the ramp at Auschwitz, one condemned to life, the other to the gas chamber; the feverish baby torn from its mother; the orphanages emptied and the children marched to the cattle cars. These incidents, multiplied by the hundreds of thousands, may recede for a while. But ultimately they lie in wait for all of us. Beside all this, the real world grows pale and dim as we search for a reckoning or an understanding. Experts have written thousands of pages to explain what happened, to analyze the paroxysm that seized Germany and its collaborators elsewhere. We wonder even now whether this is a savagery that only sleeps, waiting to be brought to the surface. It will take many years before we cease to suffer over the deeds of the twelve-year Reich, the worlds it destroyed, the hatreds it engendered. And between the survivors on both sides, all that seems possible is grief and silence.

As for Berlin, its years as the sleeping beauty behind its hedge of thorns are now over. As the contemporary world breaks in, as Berlin

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transforms itself into the capital of the new German nation, that never-never world that I knew, and that the local Berliners now lament, will surely slip away. But we all remember that for a while a unique civilization was created here, idiosyncratic, outside of time, and entirely a pleasure.

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Teatime in Leningrad

Elisavietta Ritchie

The Fortress of Peter and Paul
reflects its gold spire in the Neva,
calm as if coups and wars had not
dumped in their cargoes of corpses.

In childhood my aunt and her brothers
played on these quays. Before
the Revolution, was she too young
to dance in that palace? In 1919

her elder brother was shot near Putivl.
In 1920 my father, wounded, escaped
through Crimea to Greece.
The Reds wouldn't let her leave.

Always too risky to write
more than a postcard. No mail
during the war, none now for years.
She would be 84. My first visit. . . .

At the end of a muddy courtyard
pocked with old bullet holes,
past a jumble of broken concrete,
then up five unlighted flights,

I locate her last-known address, knock.
A young man unlocks two thick doors.
I show a letter from ten years ago.
"Could she still be alive?"

"She's at the piano." A white dog
and gray cat sit beside an old lady.
She stops mid-Scriabin. "You are here!
From America! Let us have tea."

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What a straight and delicate profile!
Her dress, navy with white polka dots,
is stained and patched. At her throat
a medal for courage during the 900 Days.

The table is draped with a paisley shawl.
Neighbors bring pastries, raspberry wine.
They complain of no sugar or coffee,
black-market sausage, and as for vodka—

"Never mind," she says, "We'll share
our rations. One must *live*, not just
reside on this earth. Life will improve
when the Nazis and Bolsheviks leave."

"She's blind now," the neighbors whisper.
"She lives in a past best forgotten."
"Troubles enough in the present. . . . "
She pours our tea without spilling

and speaks of ancestral portraits
I must see at the Hermitage, and how
she met Akhmatova in the park, and walked
with Pasternak through the woods.

She speaks of her brothers as children.
Only now I have lived can I start to know
their lives. They have died, and I
learn what it is to live. . . .

I ask about the Blockade. The young man,
her student, warns me: "Old people exaggerate."
"No. You children can't imagine the horrors—
Yet who would believe all we endured?

"My husband, hit at the Front the first week,
was shipped to the Urals to mend
but shrapnel splinters stayed in his brain. . . .
For Leningraders trapped inside the Iron Ring:

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Shells all night. I learned to fire artillery.
By day I shoveled rubble into barricades,
tore barracks down for fuel,
hauled sandbags through the snow.

All on one slice of fake bread. Some days
a thousand died of famine, illness, cold.
We tripped on bodies in the street.
An orphan I adopted disappeared.

A truce was set to truck the children north
across the frozen Ladoga.
Still the Nazis opened fire—
before our eyes were children blown apart.

"I've outlived tears, but not my hate
for Germans. Medals can't hide scars. . . .
Peace came. Again the old denunciations,
midnight arrests, labor camps, more deaths. . . . "

The student interrupts. "I once heard my mother
whisper that in the Siege *her* mother, dying
from hunger, begged the family to eat her.
And when she died," he shudders, "they did."

My aunt sips her tea and, the way you might say,
If it's snowing, of course wear your boots,
she shrugs, "Better they ate than buried her.
And all winter the earth is stone. "

"I must go—" I throw my sweater around her.
She fills my pocket with chocolates. "But where
will you hide in the air raid, dear? And watch
your step—still that corpse on the stairs—"

"Don't worry, that's over, all long ago!"
I embrace her, wind down to the midnight dusk,
her candies squashed in my hands,
my terrible questions undone.

✪ ELISAVIETTA RITCHIE's books include *Flying Time: Stories and Half-Stories, Tightening the Circle Over Eel Country,* and *Raking the Snow.*

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A Culture of One's Own

QUENTIN ANDERSON

DEMOCRACY PROPOSES that everybody count for one and that the choice of the majority is to prevail. But in nineteenth-century America three writers we have come to regard as representative of our distinctive character, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman, gave no weight to the numerical addition of existing voices. Nor did the idea of the collective majesty of the people, which informed the French Revolution, exist for them. What they proposed instead was an alteration of individual consciousness: everybody was to aspire to be the One, to become capable of a dazzlingly complete imaginative grasp of the world. They acknowledged that the access to godlike power was so far apparent to few, and to these few only at times, but they urged their contemporaries to look within, to clear their vision of the obscuring smudges of family and daily business, so that they might see that the whole of things was glorious and as open to their perception of it as if they had made it for themselves. What society and organized religion could not do for you, you could do for yourself, and only through yourself.

This astounding extrapolation of individual powers, which I described in *The Imperial Self* (1971), puts most of the facts of one's life in the background; they become barriers to a personal expansion. Since we cannot actually escape a human condition that involves birth, growth, and death, or the ties of parenthood and life in a community, this claim for individual powers may be thought of as simply aberrant—as it often was at the time—or as a response to the character of the surrounding culture. My thesis is that it clearly was an inclusive attempt to counter the prevailing cultural ethos and that similarly inclusive efforts at cultural transformation persist and inform American literature and thought from the Jacksonian period to the present day. In short, our culture repeatedly produces opponents who demand something impossible and in itself contradictory: a revolution in individual attitudes toward the country we inhabit. Why do Americans continue to make such apocalyptic demands on each other, demands whose very generality works to further a diminution in their

✪ QUENTIN ANDERSON, professor emeritus of English at Columbia University, is the author of *The Imperial Self* and *The American Henry James*. This essay is drawn from his forthcoming book, *Making Americans: An Essay on Individualism and Money* to be published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

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capacity to grant each other a full measure of existence—as if others could be granted reality only after transforming themselves?

The answer is so familiar as to be almost inapprehensible. The experience of American individuals was, to a far greater extent than in Europe, framed by expectations of personal gain and loss; it followed that those who attempted to escape this aspect of the cultural climate were impelled to make claims for the individual that greatly exaggerated his power to disembed himself from his milieu. Europeans, for whom the rising ascendancy of commerce was a far more visible spectacle—since it appeared against the background of established classes, institutions, and traditions—contributed brilliant analyses of a phenomenon they faced more directly. Americans, however, produced no Balzac or Zola, and proponents of revolutionary social change were few and occupied peripheral positions. This failure attests to an immersion in commerce so complete as to make it difficult indeed to imagine a comprehensive change in the social structure; the idea of an escape seemed open only to individuals.

The "commercial republic" James Madison had described in *The Federalist Papers* had come into being and was in many respects an unparalleled success, but what loomed largest for our three writers, in the time of Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren, was not the republic but a commercial society in which individuals pursued private ends. We may put it as Alexis de Tocqueville did: the individual American in pursuit of identity and a settled sense of things had to turn to material acquisition for the only assurance the society offered.

The United States, which gave so many a high degree of personal freedom, lacked many of the socially defined goals present in societies in which family, tradition, and institutional complexity defined the individual's choices. It is also clear that the new nation afforded fewer defenses against the ascendancy of the most impersonal forms of social relationship: those created by monetary distinctions and by acquisition and exchange in general. Neither a shared sense of the national interest nor organized religion proved able, except in wartime, to stand up to the pervasive influence of values based on money. What Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman offered was a form of individualism that firmly subordinated all activities involving others to the exercise of the visionary powers of the self. Whatever called for the participation of others diminished those powers; the reciprocity demanded in everyday life, in joint endeavor, in sexual and verbal and monetary exchange, fatally obscured the primacy of vision by pinning the individual to a multiplicity of roles. Nothing less than an epistemological overturn could rescue the self from fragmentation. To know the scene of existence was to have an undivided consciousness of it.

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In effect these three men were making what most historians have judged a premature assertion: the announced ends of the republic had been seriously undermined by the institution that the Revolution had not touched, the whole nexus of relations associated with money and property. This trio ignored all the possibilities of change in the society and proclaimed that the road to a community of equals lay solely in a transformation of individuals—a wholesale secular conversion. It was this singular proposal to which their admirers responded; it is to be found in Emerson's early work, in the first two editions of *Leaves of Grass* (1855, 1856), and in Thoreau before he subscribed to the activities of John Brown.

What remained after one had seen through every aspect of associated life—eating, making love, getting a living, caring for the children, making a name for oneself in the society? These things had to be seen through, had to become transparent, so that one might perceive that great order which was our preeminent object, the only object adequate to the selfhood that was or might become ours. The name they often gave that object, "nature," begged the whole question of the civilization to which these men belonged; theirs was an effort, necessarily incomplete, to articulate a fresh set of ties between our individual existence and its complement, being in general, to see ourselves not in the light of the vexed history of the species but in that of a total conception of the scheme of things.

The version of selfhood this implies is striking not simply in its extravagance but in its divergence from earlier Western parallels. Gnostics, late medieval free spirits, certain English revolutionaries studied by Christopher Hill, the English romantics had all made wide claims for the self, but they regularly acknowledged that they were actively contending with a going order, divine or social. All three of these Americans would have refused to admit that they were externally threatened by the character of their society, in a fashion later described as alienated. They sought to subordinate ties to others, ties that threatened their capacity to possess the world entire, but society was too ephemeral to be an opponent. They denied, that is, that they were expending their energies on denial because the spectacle they sought and sometimes glimpsed was too august to be compared to the mere dailiness of associated lives. They recognized individuals who displayed extraordinary powers not because these individuals had an importance as historical agents but because they were splendid instances of our generic possibilities. It was not society that furnished the motives that animated Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman; it was, as they saw it, their very nature as human beings that led them to focus on that larger object which those immersed in society were blind to.

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Yet the very fact that their common aspiration was patently impossible to realize suggests that it was adopted in the face of a threat to what they most cherished in themselves, that it was both radical and enforced by what was, in their theory, unable to overset them. Theirs was, after all, an attempt to extricate themselves.

As I have indicated, the leading clue to the nature of what provoked such assertions of the powers of the self is to be found in that aspect of their culture whose effect on them they denied, the only pressure that had an equal generality: the fact that the citizens of the United States were more alone with money—had, that is, fewer defenses against the imaginative domination of acquisition, possession, the reduction of all questions to those of exchange values—than any Western people who had heretofore existed. How else, one might ask, could the task of taking possession of a thinly populated continent have been undertaken, except, that is, by a citizenry impelled by economic motives? Our boasted newness, the fact that our civic order conferred rights that few others enjoyed, was necessarily complemented by an unprecedented vulnerability to the relatively impersonal dominion of standards derived from the hope of personal gain.

In the three decades preceding the Civil War, the depth of the nation's immersion in the impersonal processes of exchange became apparent to a few people as something more fundamental than the momentary ascendancy of a set of greedy "speculators"—the most common view of the cause of the panic of 1837. It seems clear that a revulsion against the "Monster Bank" had the character of a popular feeling, although historians have shown that conflicting hopes of financial gain had much to do with the opposition to a national bank. What counted most heavily for the three writers discussed here was an erosion of the possible bases of a sense of the nature and powers of the individual. To repeat: democracy and egalitarianism offered individuals an almost unprecedented degree of individual freedom, yet the commercial character of the new republic sharply limited the variety of recognized ways in which that freedom could be employed.

To fasten our attention on the implications of an attempt to find a calling in this period—as did Henry Nash Smith in writing "Emerson's Problem of Vocation" —is to begin to explore a dilemma that was common to all the young men of the time who sought to enlarge their horizons beyond money-making. The vocations chosen or created by our three writers seemed to isolate them but were in effect proposals to all their peers. Emerson became preacher to all those who felt isolated because they felt enclosed by the limiting character of the commercial nation; Whitman adopted a role closer to that of a shaman than that

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of a (socially defined) "poet." He meant to call forth a reality for others that his own "interior republic" of awareness embraced, while Thoreau proposed the making or remaking of selves capable of the ample perceptions he enjoyed in his daily walks. What was common to the chosen vocations of these three men was an awareness—premature in the eyes of historians—of a desiccating sameness in the preoccupations of those about them to which the natural order in even its least exalted manifestations provided an inspiriting contrast; woods, fields, and waters appeared to have so much more to say about the possibilities of human existence than the domesticated life of the village, town, or even nation. Such a sameness, later attributed to industrial civilization, was perceptible in Concord and demanded a thoroughgoing refocusing of attention on the part of its inhabitants if they were ever to glimpse the fullness of human realization.

Such a sameness, a determined shrinkage in the field of vision, could not be combated piecemeal or by persuasion; it called for Whitman's "new man," for people with a new and far wider perceptual field. It is clear that these three felt isolated and appealed to others on that ground long before the population at large began to manifest such feelings—and then, we might put it, only if they could afford to—but the trio does furnish a striking forecast of what was to come.

Their inclusive assertion of the powers of the self departs from the opportunities to seek one's own salvation that Protestantism had made available and leans initially on the widely diffused notion of the "moral sense." When Emerson supplemented the latter with the assurance of access to the noumenal realm provided by Kant's successors, when, that is, he was able to speak of the "Reason" as offering a secure grasp on reality to individuals, his armory was complete. He had intellectual justification for starting from his own perception of the world rather than from what the society offered as a governing view of it. How to express a religious passion that no longer found communal expression? He cultivated it at home and offered an example to others who found themselves equally estranged from congregational worship.

What Emerson was doing when he spoke or wrote with hearers or readers in mind (his distinction between speech and print was far less marked than ours) is misapprehended if one regards it as the activity of someone preaching a doctrine labeled "transcendentalism." The term made Emerson uneasy simply because there was no such doctrine. Putting the social fact before the Emersonian assertion, we must imagine an Emerson who had reached adolescence among those, including his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, whom he saw as sharing a faith. His belief in her faith was sustained, but he saw it was not his and that oth-

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ers had a faith that, increasingly, seemed empty to him, seemed so distracted by the world's business as to be hollow. He could not believe that the means publicly available to him would summon anyone to the exalted sense of things he experienced. He was alone, yet they too were alone and did not realize it. His own delighted sense of things was intermittent, yet he could not doubt its centrality, nor the possibility of exhibiting it in such a way as to jog others into enjoying what they could only enjoy by entering into themselves as he had.

Hearing or reading Emerson offered his admirers an often intoxicating spiritual enfranchisement that those who disliked or ridiculed him saw as an attack on morality and civil order as well as established churches. Francis Bowen, reviewing Emerson's *Nature* of 1836, remarked acidly, "A hermitage is no school of morals."

It has always been easy to understand why the young, confronted by a world constricted, shaped, blocked, *owned* by their elders who had already defined themselves, discover a tonic presence in Emerson. Far from confining them to a hermitage, he aroused a sense of infinite possibilities that were tacitly denied by the very being of a settled and defined adult world. But this account of Emerson as food for the young works to blur and obscure his subversive power, which was a solvent of the humdrum character, the taken-for-granted flatness, of a commercial society for adults as well. What was condemned as moonshine, a vague religiosity, answered a felt need for a place in a world no longer informed by a set of divine sanctions. Emerson didn't simply fill a void where religion had once been; he premised the need for an interior struggle to right one's perspective on an existing world. His was no spiritual nostrum but a supple, shrewd, and inclusive assault on things as they were, an assault directed not at the things made but at the processes through which people, individuals, were defining their very lives.

If Emerson deprecated any doctrine, any set of governing ideas, and simply carried on the activity of being or becoming "Emerson"—a preacher to everyone's potential, interior self—why do we find him impersonal? A married man with children, a devoted attendant at the meetings of a Concord circle of merchants and farmers, even on occasion a rather grumpy churchgoer, who saw to it that his daughters attended regularly, a writer capable of lively sketches of character such as "Ezra Ripley, D.D." or "The Chardon Street Convention," the composer, at the time of his second marriage, of a historical address on Concord, and so on, Emerson was far from appearing a "come-outer," as he called the reformers of Chardon Street's gathering. Yet his appeal to his fellows was indeed impersonal, and was necessarily so, since

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he was combating a widespread set of mind among those around him that he was far too practical to believe he could dissolve with his rhetoric. Only his example might serve, and his speeches and his writings were chiefly aimed at an exemplary end for which he had many names, such as "a union ideal in actual individualism." Mothers, fathers, and children and those immersed in village life might properly have asked: Where is the continuity in our lives in all this? Can illuminated moments have consequences for tomorrow, or are they not hopelessly enclosed experiences for most of us?

The harsh answer that Emerson himself gave in "Experience" is that the root meaning of our lives is indeed found among the "bleak rocks" of our own musings. The correspondence of this answer to the spectacle of a nation gripped by the impersonal, atemporal world of money is what needs exploration. If money had indeed worked to reduce the variety and intensity of felt human bonds in the society as a whole, the process would, in the degree that it affected large numbers of people, surely be hard to discern. Most of those who found themselves distanced from others, and taking a view in which monetary relationships occupied more of their sense of others than was the case abroad, would hardly have been able to make Emerson's response. They would instead obey King Lear's injunction to find out their enemies now, as they in fact did during the panic of 1837. Emerson's response was not to denounce a discrete group of others (the speculators) as greedy and irresponsible but to condemn a widespread blindness to the true nature of mankind's relation to the experienced world. The fault was not that of a nameable set of rascals but of all those who had denied their own true nature and mistakenly blamed their fellows as the wrongdoing others.

Emerson had withdrawn to a ministry addressed to individuals in their singleness, not in their affiliated social state. Committed to invoking their visionary powers, he undertook to shock them into awareness of what they might come to see. He was not a reformer but the herald of an epistemological overturn that could only take place in individuals. Few were prepared to see how radical his demand was or how it had been provoked by the contemporary scene, but those who did were incited as he was by the solitariness they felt and were delighted to find that it could be seen as a fulfilling—even glorious—way of grasping things. Genius has the uncomfortable habit of perceiving what has not been actualized or given form by others. From the point of view of those who find society inescapable, Emerson's was a desperate step, but the very conviction that society is indeed inescapable

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leads us to see that it was in fact a reaction to the times in which he lived as it also was for Thoreau and Whitman.

It is the very differences between these two and Emerson and the no less striking differences between Thoreau and Whitman that make the coincidence of their views of the cultural matrix they tried to transform significant. Regarding them from a distance in time, we can see that they addressed a common concern, shouldered a common burden, realized the job of creating an American identity within a discernible set of limiting conditions. Emerson's realization of those conditions fired up the energies of both the younger men, yet it exhibits both the power and the inadequacy of what we once blithely called "influence," since their voices remained so distinct. It was not a common set of ideas or a common emotional endowment that allied them, but a common awareness of the scene on which they found themselves.

Emerson's realization of the character of his time cannot be ours, since it was an original discovery, yet it continues to amaze us, especially of course since we can now take a fuller measure of it than did his contemporaries, by reading his journals and letters. The stance he took before his world, the claim for the self I have emphasized and spoken of as a response to a situation he found urgent and even desperate, is the one he offered the public, and the one that has sunk into American consciousness because it appears to have emerged from it. Our theme is not that of the biographer who tries to do justice to every facet of a life but is an attempt to discover what being Emerson had to do with being an American of his time and of ours.

In Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman the public stance took the form of a proclamation that they enjoyed a mode of possessing the world that only "poets" or "makers" could share. In Emerson the "poet" is possessor of land and sea in a world in which others who have not come to share his vision are but "tenants and boarders." He is one who is willing, as Emerson puts it in "Experience," to pay "the costly price of sons and lovers" for "reality." The term *poet* is nowadays open to misapprehension; it is in our use too limited to carry the full range of implications here. All three of these writers offered what they hoped would prove an inviting example of the result of paying that price: possession of a view of the whole of things that was as yet fragmented by their daily lives. Everybody was to become the maker of his world. The masculine pronoun is appropriate; women were thought hopelessly bound by the interlaced reciprocal offices of their lives, which fatally limited their visionary capacity.

What has most often obscured our estimation of the part these three played among us is the subsequent creation of a realm of art con-

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ceived as distinct from direct address to the American people. By tucking Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman into niches reserved for artists, we long elided and softened their demand for a revolution in each American, and our use of them as somehow representative of our culture remains superficial because it fails to acknowledge their persistent subversive force.

They did not think of themselves as speaking for the special concerns of art, and they had no way of anticipating the disappearance of the belief that the associated lives of Americans ought to represent an integrated body of practice and value. It was the character of our associated life that led them to offer an alternative, and radically different, sense of things.

No matter how illusory their hope was, they thought they could get others to see that a single overriding context was available to their hearers and readers, a context in which occupations, ties to others, and material interests were set aside in favor of a generic view of the human situation. The fact that they tacitly, and sometimes overtly, excluded slaves and women limits but does not cancel the force of their address to a society given over to commerce. What we must, I think, acknowledge, is that Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were not fighting a straw man; they were encountering an actuality they had reason to regard as devastating to their sense of themselves. A solitary, total, and guiltless possession of the world was the only alternative they could conceive, and it is one over which we may boggle.

Was the society indeed so loosely textured? Did what was called "transcendentalism" amount to a "revivalism of the intellectuals," as Richard Hofstadter called it? Were single persons in fact the only conceivable sources of illumination for these three geniuses? Studies of the Jacksonian period may not have made enough of the likeness between two movements that emphasized moments of experience: the one an announcement of utter subjection at the mourner's bench, which took place at revivals; the other a moment of triumphant realization of the union of self and its object, as in Emerson's passage on becoming a "transparent eyeball." Organized religion had played a part: Emerson's view of things emerges from the Unitarianism of William Ellery Channing. The doyen of American Unitarianism had asserted that we were godlike insofar as we brought God's attributes to bear in our life and conduct. Chief among them was the gift of reason, "God's vicegerent" in us all. Channing also insisted, in writing against an excessive concern with associations for benevolent purposes, that our individual exercise of reason must not be clouded by such piecemeal efforts at reform, anticipating Emerson's denunciation of all merely social efforts

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to do good, which amounted to a species of apostasy, a delegation of bits of what should remain integral and inviolate, one's inner monitions. Only these inner promptings attested our access to universal truth.

"Individualism," the term Tocqueville made his own, has often been employed too broadly by cultural historians, as if it had been in each case a conscious choice to act for oneself in a society that was so constituted as to offer a maximum number of permitted variations in behavior. What we fail to acknowledge is the way and the degree to which individualism was enforced by social conditions. Channing and Emerson were recoiling from a traffic in good intentions, each with its booth, slogans, and merit badges. Yet they could hardly escape the medium in which they moved. Theirs was a society in which freedom had been reduced to the freedom to make a claim in one's own behalf.

That claim might be realized through the acquisition of property or status—the former was increasingly found in association with the latter—or it might be a claim to spiritual possessions—more precisely, to a capacity for imaginative dominion or even to a capacity to create what was apprehended. Channing clung to the church, operating on the social scene as a source of authority; Emerson conferred all authority—moral, imaginative, and spiritual—on an ideal selfhood he strove to realize in himself and exemplify for others. He was persuaded that such a claim to an inclusive imaginative dominion could be distinguished from all that was debasing in a claim to possessions of one's own. The only sort of drama he permitted himself, since his was not an effort to act on others directly, was the quasi-dramatic tension he set up by appropriating the language of political economy for spiritual uses, a rhetorical gambit that Thoreau employed as well, particularly in the initial section of *Walden*, "Economy."

Perhaps the most significant of the rejections made by these imperial selves was a rejection of faith in the republic in which they lived. Although they were ready to celebrate examples of heroic civic virtue in the past, their notion of its theoretic link to a community that was prepared to recognize it as the very basis of a republic was dim or altogether absent. The citizen capable of acknowledging the qualities of those fit to rule in a secular world threatened by force without and corruption within, the ideal described by J. G. A. Pocock in *The Machiavellian Moment*, had no place in their thought. Their effectual detachment from the founders' conception of the society took place before the Civil War. For them "market man," as Pocock calls him, had already made any approximation of the ancient republican ideal

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illusory. Indeed their individualism precluded the recognition of the skills of the statesman as *social*.

Michael Walzer's treatment of the debates in the revolutionary convention in France that centered on the question of the transfer of sovereignty from the crown to the people suggests how fundamental was Tocqueville's error when he spoke of the American state as a power that loomed over those who had created it. No such imaginative weight attended the individual American's view of the newly created republic. Both fact and hope nurtured a sense of inclusion in a vast and promising human venture for the millions of nineteenth-century America, but the sense of nationhood played a much smaller part than it did elsewhere in the West. Yehoshua Arieli's term, "state-nation," makes the needed emphasis; we were, as Perry Miller repeatedly reminded us, a "made" nation, founded on a compact we had written down at a datable moment, and the nation could not draw on a funded reverence, biological or traditional, for adherence to a belief in its overriding importance. All this is familiar; what has not been sufficiently emphasized is the radical consequence for individual minds and sensibilities. We have recognized the precision of Michel de Crèvecoeur's framing of the question of American identity, asking what the American is rather than what sort of nation the Americans have created. The question was asked by others, as Emory Elliott's *Revolutionary Writers* informs us. Writers of the immediately post-Revolutionary period invented hermit sages, woodland Solons, who were implored for answers. The answers forthcoming from Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were in large measure definitive, but we have simply failed to see what they imply. What they chiefly imply is that the only alternative to a career of acquisition is the effort to achieve a total imaginative possession of one's world.

Who among Europeans was, or could have been, led to apprehend this breathtaking shortcut? For Marx an end to history as he conceived it was indeed similar; a fully realized humanity would no longer need such institutional props as the state. But the path that led to this consummation was one of prolonged conflict. We may surely accuse Marx of extrapolating his hopes for a transformation of society far beyond what has proved practicable or theoretically viable. But Emerson extrapolated a hope for individuals where he stood, canceled the presumption that the past was compelling, and announced that the realization of our humanity was in sight. Was this possible because he did not live among nations enduring conflict without and within?

Conor Cruise O'Brien's assertion that the inhabitants of Western nations have made a commitment to nationalism matching in intensity

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their former attachment to religion is hardly borne out by the United States, which claimed that it had been founded on principles applicable to mankind in general. To be superior with respect to principle implies that others should adopt your basic character. The principles are held to be universal rather than national. Chief among them are the rights accorded individuals. All this is familiar, but its effect on the situation of the particular citizen has a more immediate bearing on the work of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman than we have yet acknowledged.

Yet what I have described as an adventurous shortcut on the part of three writers when contrasted with the imaginative situation of European writers and thinkers may well have seemed less so in the Jacksonian period and the presidency of Martin Van Buren. The nation was new, had been founded within the memory of men still living, and was nonetheless held to be based on universal principles, now for the first time held universally applicable. Did Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman not walk through an open door? Had not the contention that this country's new civic order was a kind of capstone of Western man's long search for a just form of government inspired a further conclusion: that individuals are in themselves capable of becoming originating sources of moral and spiritual authority?

We may be altogether sure that this apparently plausible connection doesn't hold; it is far easier to see this extraordinary trio as making a distinctive use of religious impulses than as concerned with political institutions. In his first two editions of *Leaves of Grass* (1855, 1856) Whitman celebrates American institutions but always with the assumption that they will take on the supreme virtue they now lack when we have become exemplars of his "new man," the mortal divinities he glimpses in the eighth section of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."

Emerson was not seeking a symmetry between the announced design of the new nation and the selfhood he wished to achieve. Rather he saw the nation's sole justification as its provision of circumstances that would enable him to make that selfhood, to compass the widest possible view of existence; this was the goal of our species as he conceived it. Institutions were useful in the measure that they left you free to pursue your inclusive goal.

To share in collective hopes or fears, to become a partisan or enter into conflict, to play any limiting role, was to forfeit your precious chance to grasp the whole. Unavoidable ties to family, friends, townsmen were, in your halcyon moments, felt as intrusive, as motes in your vision of things. This passion for isolation had its reward in a sense that existence was indeed a sufficient object; that you had pow-

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ers of perception congruent with its ordered multifariousness. Viewing this impulse to visionary possession from our cultural distance, it seems plain that its power to dissipate the disruptions and pressures of daily life was not the least of its attractions.

Emerson and the two younger men whom he helped to launch on paths parallel to his own had assumed a curious and anomalous stance toward the society in which they lived. Renouncing any action with or upon their fellows, they set about offering a fresh mode of construing experience that, while avoiding any explicit acknowledgment of religious faith, strongly resembled the office of Jesus as Unitarians—who did not grant him divinity—conceived it. To be akin to Jesus was simply to aspire to a similar exhibition of fully realized human possibilities; to show, as William Ellery Channing put it in a sermon delivered in 1828, a "likeness to God." Or, recalling Whitman's line in "Song of Myself," to become one of the millions of Christs streaming forth from the tomb. This meant denying that you sought to impose your belief on others; it meant, in short, exemplifying a realized humanity, a performance of showing and telling on a grand scale. This performance was addressed not to any constituted public but to the latent divinity of single persons who might conceivably respond to the spectacle of an exemplary self by awaking to their own inward possibilities.

To be thus awakened was to glimpse your chances to see the world as an object made for your grasp, to see it en bloc. The faces of those around you, the issues that preoccupied them, the fragmentation of your consciousness vanished. Your access to the universal reduces your fellow citizens to conditions rather than sharers in your experience; you are for the moment seer and judge of the whole. Others are, in the degree that you assume the right to define existence on the basis of your own authority, necessarily viewed impersonally, as means, or parts of your design, or threats, but never as players on a dramatic scene. Others who share similar aspirations, those who figure in the chilling discussions of friendship in Emerson and Thoreau, may facilitate your access to the universal but must not claim recognition as characters in the lesser world of daily affairs. These three undertook the job of nudging others into an awareness of their potential sovereignty. To assure others that they could, by turning to their hidden inward resources, make it alone required extraordinary rhetorical and poetic skills. Our three writers employed all their practical sagacity about the world of daily experience to make the isolation they knew others felt into the very ground of their earthly salvation.

To understand the felt needs that led to making these wide claims for the powers of the self, to describe the consequences of making

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such claims for those who adopted them, and to explore the significance of these attitudes as indices of the character of the culture at the time, I consider individual works by figures we have treated as central. Since my topic has to do with self-definition and its consequences, this is the available evidence. I am here employing the emphasis on the self we find in Emerson and am maintaining that individualism's resort to universal claims is a response to the character of the culture he saw about him. If so, we must grant that this sentence from a lecture of 1842 is not an instance of the extravagance of a peripheral "transcendentalist" but is central to our understanding of the times. The sentence runs: "That which is best in nature, the highest prize in life is the perception in the private heart of access to the universal." What might be considered a devastating pronouncement if one nourished hopes for the human community has here become the most positive of aspirations. Viewed in this way, the surrounding community is pervaded by a suffusing unreality; what counted was an apprehension of "nature"—was found, that is, within a context wider and more permanent than any the existing society could offer.

I note two further consequences of this claim. The first is its compatibility with a sense of the physical properties of things and with our techniques for making them serve us, with nature in its most immediate sense as a scene of work and sensual gratification. There are, of course, interesting complexities here. Emerson and Thoreau tended to give primacy to literal vision, which they thought of as somehow uniting flowers, leaves, and vistas with an order that shone through all existence. In Whitman, touch plays a role along with vision, and the step he took in taking public possession of his body is very nearly unique. Yet it is a familiar fact that these three writers, who scanted the middle ground of human intercourse, paid a high tribute to the natural scene and the ways in which it delighted us and fell into accord with our humblest needs and most exalted purposes.

The second point, of which much has been made, but perhaps not enough, follows from the common presumption in all three that they could somehow abrogate the constraints of the temporal in human affairs. If one could take possession of the whole scene of existence, if only at moments, one's personal history, and history in general, could be caught up in a moment of vision. This "eternizing impulse," as we may call it, is vividly suggested in this quotation from Thoreau's journal.

> One moment of life costs many hours, hours not of business but of preparation and invitation. Yet the man who does not betake himself at once and

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desperately to sawing is called a loafer, although he may be knocking at the doors of heaven all the while, which shall surely be opened to him. That aim in life is highest which requires the highest and finest discipline. How much, what infinite, leisure it requires, as of a lifetime, to appreciate a single phenomenon! You must camp down beside it as for life, having reached your land of promise, and give yourself wholly to it. It must stand for the whole world to you, symbolical of all things. The least partialness is your own defect of sight and cheapens the experience fatally. Unless the humming of a gnat is as the music of the spheres, and the music of the spheres is as the humming of a gnat, they are naught to me. It is not communications to serve for a history—which are science—but the great story itself, that cheers and satisfies us. (Dec. 28, 1852)

In this passage it is not the language of political economy but that of theology that has been appropriated for the uses of the imperial self. "Preparation," readiness for the reception of grace, has lost the somewhat equivocal character it had for theologians, since it bordered on the heresy that grace might be earned, and the divine injunction to labor is dismissed as well. Thoreau's playful proposal in his address as a graduating senior at Harvard, that the seventh day should be devoted to toil and the other six allotted as a "sabbath of the affections and the soul, in which to range this widespread garden, and drink in the soft influences and sublime revelations of Nature," is now earnestly proposed. The promised land may be reached in a stride if we but give ourselves wholly to a "story, " which becomes wholly ours, as we become whole in beholding it. Six thousand years after the Creation, Christian Providence may be compassed in a flash, and heaven is all around us now. "Science," it appears, is but the anatomy of what may be had with a corporeal fullness if we achieve the required correspondence to being at large. To give a full and undistracted attention to but one phenomenon is to see it flower into a "symbolical" presentment of the whole.

Thorean's use of the term "story" in this passage has a central significance in any description of the claims for the imperial self I am describing. This story has neither characters nor events, nor does it involve temporal succession. The moment of illumination spreads before and after, becomes a moment in eternity in which self and its object are merged. Such closures with being are recorded in Emerson and Whitman as well. They abolish "partialness"; we are no longer bound to our origins, do not encounter other minds, have no past to burden us or future to hope for or dread. An identity validated in this way presents itself with its own certification of a full-fledged human existence: the power to entertain its universal object attests its own

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being. But this beholder of all is also beheld by human others and must acknowledge that scene as well, no matter how much unreality he ascribes to it.

The gulf between this effort at self-definition and that of Nathaniel Hawthorne is a wide one and offers a revealing contrast, not simply because as a writer of fiction Hawthorne offers simulacra of the fragmented selves Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman saw as hopelessly confined to social roles, but because Hawthorne happens to have been wholly dedicated to the conviction that our lives are to be understood and valued solely through the character and quality of our relations to other people.

Hawthorne's fictions represent us as occupying a position in a web of human ties, as do George Eliot's, although his registration of those ties depends far more on the reader's presumed awareness of moral principles. He called on what he assumed to be most widely diffused among his readers: the imperatives of conscience. George Eliot shared Hawthorne's concern with moral issues, but she could draw on the resources afforded by a much denser social scene, addressing readers aware of settled social expectations and traditionally defined obligations. Hawthorne's tumultuous and shifting society afforded few instances of a taken-for-granted way of life against which change could be sketched. He had to invent the world of seventeenth-century Boston, create a Salem of his own, and build a plausible Brook Farm. His work is necessarily more abstract, yet his abiding interest lies in the interplay between individuals and the community they inhabit. An escapee from solitude himself, he was forever imagining situations in which a passion or a quirk of character led to isolation, broken ties with others, irreconcilable divisions. He was no less conscious of the cost of communal rigidities that precluded recognition of individual claims, and in the early story "My Kinsman Major Molineux" and in *The Scarlet Letter* these rifts between self and society and their effect on our most intimate bonds are intertwined to produce masterpieces. The clashing demands of the individual's passions or convictions and those of community are at the heart of Hawthorne's work. As John A. Thompson long ago remarked, *The Scarlet Letter* deals with irreconcilable conflict in a fashion we recognize as akin to Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents.*

Hawthorne sees a world in which the effort to discover a basis for one's identity in nature without reference to our inescapable ties to others is not simply injurious to the individual but is bound to issue in a distortion as grave as that which overtakes the searcher for the unpardonable sin in Hawthorne's "Ethan Brand." By embarking on a search for a

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universal rule applicable to mankind at large, the inquirer commits himself to an insensate fanaticism: his fellows are no longer his fellows but objects for his research and he is fatally cut off from them. In the same fashion the elders of Boston find themselves possessed of a universal rule applicable to all adulterers, and Young Goodman Brown, following his attendance at the witches' sabbath, believes himself empowered to make a universal judgment of the sinfulness of his townsmen. Clearly, the worst thing we can do in Hawthorne's eyes is to deny the full humanity of those around us. Such an effort is found among those who proclaim that they mean to do us good as well as those who try to harm us. The malign Westervelt of Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance* is an overt exploiter of others, but in the event he proves less capable of harm than the insular reformer, Hollingsworth, whose passion for prison reform makes him utterly ruthless.

For Hawthorne the movement from estrangement and isolation to a selfhood sanctioned by reciprocal relations with others was liberating and enlivening. The youngster whose mother's meals were set down before her closed door may almost be said to have found an identity in Sophia's arms; and if he did in fact shed tears when he read *The Scarlet Letter* to her, it was because he knew the cost of bearing existence as a solitary man. The difference between the way in which he conceived of his place in the world and that which Herman Melville exhibits in *Moby Dick* offers yet another instance of the effort to conceive an American identity in the face of a society that provided few established paths to its fulfillment.

Melville begins his masterpiece with the sentence "Call me Ishmael." He is at once referring to a character who was driven out of his community and providing his narrator with the stance of detachment that qualifies him as a universal spectator, one for whom the total scene is matter for solitary appraisal. The human condition has become Ishmael's object, and the fact is logically associated with what he speaks of as an alternative, "pistol and ball," since suicide is an expression of an inclusive judgment: continued existence is unbearable.

On the opening page of "The Custom House," which introduces *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne refers to his "inmost Me" in terms that make it clear that it is not our business, that—in the familiar phrase from the story that follows—the worst thing one can do is "violate the sanctity of a human heart." Hawthorne assumes that he may find a number of understanding and sympathetic readers, friends to his work, who, we may add, could communicate their pleasure to each other. Writing, then, is a social act that will engage some, be ignored by others. Those who respond accept another voice in the great mixed chorus

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that sounds for them all. The axes of these opening emphases on personal identity are distinct. Hawthorne's axis runs from the mystery of his identity to its veiled manifestation for others, others who have a virtual presence for the writer; together they help to constitute, through the words he has chosen, a public space of discourse bounded on every side by the "inmost Me" of those who, in their turn, discover a measure of common response to the world as they imagine it.

Melville, who writes in the person of a narrator, does not appear to be speaking for himself, but since he creates no such public space in what he writes we know that he must be. He addresses us through an Ishmael who faces a single and intractable world in which, as we know when we have finished his book, no other voice can make an effectual difference. The public space Hawthorne hopes to create has vanished. Ishmael's focus becomes ours, no presumption that we are somehow present to Melville as hoped-for sharers of a social world remains; we are as alone as Ishmael, if not as desperate—but only if we are capable of experiencing in some degree his sense of isolation. We join in asking inclusive questions of existence and do not expect to hear any answers except those the central consciousness offers. We are alone insofar as we fall in with Ishmael's sense of things, but it is also implied that those who attend to this lone voice are members of a company of those who share the sense of being isolated. When *Moby Dick* was published in 1851, they were not numerous.

The distinction between Melville's proffer of a world-engrossing consciousness through Ishmael and Hawthorne's invocation of a company of readers with whom he shares a sense of the way things go in their common world fades into insignificance for Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman before the fact that both Hawthorne and Melville were writers of fiction, and as such dealt with a world of merely social selves. To attack that world directly was to involve oneself in it; the primary task, as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman saw it, was to put forward exemplary instances of the wholeness of vision that might conduce to the social world's conversion. Fiction, however, claimed a place in our imaginations that they sought to win for themselves. Fiction is opposed to the eternizing impulse of the imperial self; both history and fiction call on figured events and possibilities, bind us to the transient, and reinforce the belief that the self is vulnerable to change suffered at the hands of unassimilable human others. They felt that dramatic encounters with others were fatal to our chance to see things whole and unchanging.

The plural human world in which Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau were forced to live did not offer them an acceptable way of knowing

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it; they made their own epistemological revision and offered it to others. They were hardly prepared to recognize that *Moby Dick*, a mere fiction, shared their individualism—the presumption that we see the world from a perspective that no other consciousness can affirm.

After the Civil War such inclusive claims for the resources of the self as were made by Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman proved impossible to maintain. Come-outers were forced to borrow lesser universal attitudes, such as Henry George's crusade for the single tax, or, in our own century, such fantasies of an all-inclusive opposition to the money-saturated scene as were exhibited by the fellow travelers of the Communists. This use of ostensibly public schemes for the private purposes of individuals has continued to erode the possibility of an actual politics among us. What we have to learn is what Hawthorne knew, that visionary capitalism is not an escape from the world in which our relations with others are ever more impoverished by an invasive money context. If we wish to see the world differently we must find ways of enhancing the character and quality of our relations with human others.

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An Amish Beginning

JOHN A. HOSTETLER

I GREW UP IN A CULTURE that emphasizes humility, simple living, and the fear of God. Discouraged or forbidden were various forms of self-advancement, higher education, the philosophical and speculative endeavors of life, as well as violence and the arts of war. Although the Amish retain a high percentage of their young people, a few choose not to become members of the church. Still fewer pursue academic professions. In this essay I shall discuss the circumstances that motivated me to enter American academic life.

Some of my relatives before me did not remain Amish. For example, my father's brother Jake lived in Belleville, a small town in central Pennsylvania. He was owner and manager of the village creamery. He owned a large black automobile. He brought important dignitaries to our farm. One day two visitors arrived. While my father was not about, they told my brother and me to stand by the hay wagon. We obeyed. A few days later we received, in the mail, a large photograph of my brother and me. We cherished it. Nobody wanted to burn it. It lay around for a while and was finally tucked into the family Bible where it survived.

Our family paid return visits to Uncle Jake, his wife, Elsie and their daughter, Frances. Jake's house was large and had beautiful furniture. He also had a radio. When the program "Amos and Andy" came on, everyone listened. Since our family had no radio (because it was worldly), I worried that Uncle Jake was in danger of going to hell. But I liked Uncle Jake because he talked to us as individuals and asked questions. Later I learned that he signed his name "J. A. Hostetler," and because my initials were the same as his, I wrote my name in the same manner.

These early childhood excursions into the non-Amish world had lasting influences. I was attracted to the world beyond the confines of the Amish community. Uncle Jake was a model I admired.

✪ JOHN A. HOSTETLER, professor emeritus of anthropology and sociology at Temple University, is a leading authority on Amish and Hutterite communities and served as expert witness in a number of legal cases involving educational and environmental problems encountered by these groups.

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When I was eleven years old, my father was excommunicated from the Amish church. He saw himself as a victim of a jealous member who took his complaints to the bishop. My father was not a morally "bad" person. He was dogged with one complaint after another from the bishop for exceeding the boundaries. He had registered our herd of purebred milking cows, he built row houses in town, he installed a generator in our gristmill to supply electricity for the town of Belleville, built a stucco dairy barn, and so forth. After repeated attempts at reconciliation, followed by exclusion, my father had had enough. He sold the family farm he inherited from his father, and our family moved from Pennsylvania to Iowa.

In Iowa, the Amish church rules were less rigid than in Pennsylvania. We were permitted to wear two suspenders rather than one. Farming with tractors was allowed, though pneumatic tractor tires were not. Reconciliation with the Amish church was not possible for my father in Iowa, and as a family we continued regularly to attend the services.

I graduated from a country school, Snake Hollow Elementary School in Washington County, Iowa, before Amish private schools were founded. I learned to like "English" playmates. My peers entered high school after graduation, but I willingly gave up thoughts of doing so, for good Amish parents did not send their children to high school. Going to high school meant going to town and learning the ways of the town. Secretly I wanted to continue my education, but in reality I knew I would have to wait until I was "of age," which meant age twenty-one.

I grew up in a community densely populated with relatives, friends, children of all ages, a community where everyone knew just about all there was to know about neighbors. But in spite of so many people, I was lonely. I believed there was another world out there. I was not looking for an escape of just any kind, but I felt there was a destiny beyond my understanding. It would be revealed to me if I exercised patience, endurance, self-control, and peace of mind.

I tried self-education. My father needed me on the farm, and during those years of anticipation, I was inwardly compelled to prepare myself. My call was not to a specific vocation or profession but to a period of preparation, including formal schooling and study. I felt compelled to obey the call, though I did not know where it would take me.

I was interested in reading. The books available to me were extremely limited. Aside from the Bible, I read Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, and Daniel Kauffman's *Helps for Christian Workers*. The latter informed me how to organize a filing system and accumulate clippings on a wide range of topics. As I developed a filing system, my interest in writing was sparked and my

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call to college was greatly strengthened. I exchanged letters with two pen pals through a children's magazine called *Words of Cheer*. They informed me of their pets, family members, church, and travels. I was elated when, at age seventeen, the magazine published my first article, "Some Effects of Tobacco and Alcohol."

When I was seventeen I began to feel nagging pains in my stomach. On Sundays or on those days when I did not exert myself, there was no pain. I thought I might have appendicitis or perhaps cancer. If I told my family that I had belly pains only on the days I performed heavy work, they would pass it off as a joke. But the pain persisted for several months. Mother thought I had growing pains. I wanted to believe it. My father eventually took me to the doctor who said my appendix was not acutely inflamed—that is, not yet. He advised that I refrain from heavy work. I was not to lift feed bags, clean the turkey stalls, or haul grain for the threshing crew. Finally, the doctor advised that the appendix should come out. He gave us a choice of having the operation at home or in the hospital. We chose the home operation. Dr. and Mrs. Frey came early on a Saturday morning with their satchels full of instruments, and Mrs. Frey took command of the kitchen and sterilized the instruments. The operation took place on the extension table in the living room. After recovery, I still felt the dull pain in my stomach. The operation made no difference.

At age seventeen, I wanted to go to college very badly. Without telling my parents I signed a contract with the American Correspondence School to study the required high school subjects and pay tuition monthly. But mathematics and science courses were too difficult to integrate with the demands of farm work, and I was forced to drop the study. I paid a lawyer five dollars to terminate the contract. He informed the school that I had not reached legal age and did not have parental consent.

I wrote a letter to Sanford Yoder, president of Goshen College, a Mennonite institution, stating my interest in attending his college. He responded with a very inviting letter. I purchased a small treasure chest with a lock and key to keep the letter from members of my family. Going to college was a subject I could not discuss with my parents. Whenever I was depressed, I opened the chest and read the letter again and again.

About that time my father, always resourceful, signed a contract with Maple Crest Turkey Farms to secure ten thousand poults. We were to raise the birds and sell them back to the processing plant. My father designated me as the "turkey man." The hired man would assist with the routine farm operations. There was more than enough work

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to keep me busy. I took serious interest in raising turkeys and learning about their diseases and nutrition. I obtained books and magazines on raising turkeys. It was not long until I begged my father to let me attend a week's short course at the agricultural school at Ames. The purpose was to learn how to diagnose diseases. Going to college was considered vain, but going to a poultry school was "useful" for the farm economy, and therefore less objectionable. I learned that the American Poultry Association regularly held a three-week school for culling poultry and for judging poultry shows. I acquired the textbook a year in advance and attended the course in Des Moines. I obtained a lifetime license for judging poultry shows. Caring for the turkeys was more interesting than plowing, disking, or planting crops.

The turkey enterprise, however, did not answer my needs or my compelling call to prepare for life. When my father purchased another farm across the road, I had had enough. I announced at the family dinner table that I would not be a farmer: "Don't buy a farm for me, for when I reach twenty-one I am going to college." My forthright announcement was met with deadly silence. Working in the fields from morning till night, to raise corn to feed more hogs, to buy more land did not appeal to me. I felt there must be a higher purpose in life.

Around this same time I declined voluntary adult baptism in the Amish church. To be baptized in the Amish church meant a lifetime vow to uphold the discipline of the church. I truthfully could not make such a promise. What if some day I would live in a place where there were no Amish people? Would I be obliged to wear Amish trousers, hat, and suspenders and remain a farmer? What if I were to join another church, would I be excommunicated and shunned for the rest of my life? One of the Amish preachers hinted that I would be in deep trouble. It would be best, he said, not to vow rather than to make a promise and later break it. The Amish did, in fact, teach that baptism should be voluntary. The stress and trauma that plagued my father for several years back in Pennsylvania was a social sickness I wanted to avoid.

On the day that my peers—two boys and four girls—were meeting with the ministers upstairs in the Amish farm home for the first in a series of instruction classes, I drove my black pacer to the Mennonite church. My absence at the Amish service would be conspicuous. I preferred joining a Mennonite church to a more worldly church like a Methodist, Presbyterian, or Pentecostal, for the Mennonites taught nonresistance and identified with the Anabaptist faith. I wanted to be a Christian person such as my parents, my grandparents, and the seven generations back to immigrant Jacob who in 1757 forbade his sons to

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shoot the Delaware Indians who attacked the Hostetler home during the French and Indian War and murdered the mother and two children.

Driving my horse and buggy to the Mennonite church took great courage. Mennonites drove fancy, shining autos. No one acted friendly toward me. In fact, not a single person spoke to me on my first visit. But I persisted in attending the Mennonite church regularly, and finally one member, our rural mail carrier, spoke to me. Because my dress and buggy were so conspicuous, I decided it would be better if I went to church with our neighbors. The Mennonite boys were wearing very flashy neckties, white shoes, and some even wore spats on their ankles.

I asked my father for a bicycle. He responded that if I waited a year he might buy me a car. One year later I was driving a two-tone Model A Ford, and I had many friends. But Mennonite boys were a world apart from the Amish. Their talk was about the latest model cars, tractors, and speed records. Some boasted about how many girls they could date in one year. I dated none. My mother told me not to get interested in girls until I was twenty-one.

I established wider networks. Without any high school credits, I was admitted to Hesston Junior College in Kansas, fully aware of having turned my back on one of the most beautiful farms in Iowa. During the first year I enrolled in courses in civilization, psychology, Greek, salesmanship, typing, and public speaking. Even though I dropped out for three weeks during the first semester to help my father prepare for the farm sale, my grades were above average. When possible I always took a course in public speaking to help me become articulate. By working on Saturday and serving as a janitor during the week, I managed to pay all my expenses for the first year.

Part of the assignment as janitor was to live in the basement of the administration building near the furnace. One advantage was that by rooming there I was not subject to the dorm rules. My roommate Lee Kanagy and I had liberty to come and go, to make homemade ice cream, and to sell candy bars to hungry students between meals. Since this was also jackrabbit country, we sometimes found diversion on Saturdays by hunting these long-legged beasts that looked like half-grown deer compared to the cottontails I knew in Iowa.

After a year of college I sought employment to cover the next year's college expenses. A small group of boys were preparing to make big money by working in the logging industry in Oregon, and they asked me to join them. Our bed and board were provided by one of the owners of the logging company. We ate a six o'clock breakfast of sev-

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eral kinds of meat, potatoes, cheese, and cooked cereal, then rode two hours engulfed in exhaust fumes on the back of a truck to the redwoods high in the mountains. I was a "choke setter." I fastened the steel cables to the logs on a dragline, gave a signal to the man operating the dragnet, then quickly ran to a safe place. The logs were pulled through brush, rocks, and trees to a central loading zone. The hours were long and the work was rough and dangerous.

While in Oregon, I was ordered by my local draft board in Iowa to appear in July 12, 1942, for induction into Civilian Public Service. I had applied for conscientious objector status and was instructed to join work camp No. 33 at Fort Collins, Colorado. My hopes for finishing college were dashed again, this time "for the duration." I had learned the meaning of endurance on the farm, and now I was to learn its meaning in a work camp. I reasoned that the experience could be educational and broadening. There was no pay for conscientious objectors and no money from the government for living expenses. The Historic Peace Churches paid for the maintenance of the camps and gave each camper fifteen dollars per month for incidental expenses.

Of conscientious objectors to war there was a great variety. Not only were there Amish and Mennonite boys, but there were also political objectors, Jehovah's Witnesses, Assembly of God members, Friends, Christodelphians, Methodists. Most were farm boys, all willing and able workers. Through this experience my knowledge of religious groups and their beliefs was expanded. My first assignment was meat cutting. I was one of four cooks serving one hundred and fifty campers. Evening courses were available in church history, psychology, rug making, woodworking, and first aid.

Thirty of us were selected for a special project in Eastern Colorado, an arid and unproductive agricultural region. We constructed and lived in barracks thirty miles west of Sterling, Colorado. A single village store and post office constituted the village of Buckingham. We provided water facilities for range cattle. There were no wells or lakes. We dug wells from 60 to 340 feet deep and constructed large concrete cisterns for storing water. We also seeded dryland grass in the desert to keep the soil from blowing away. Rattlesnakes were rampant.

Living in the Colorado desert was confining and restrictive. I wanted to learn more about human nature and psychology, so I applied for a transfer to a mental hospital in New Jersey. Conscientious objectors were permitted to volunteer as orderlies in mental hospitals. Most lived in the hospital compound. At Marlboro State Hospital, a community of trained professionals cared for the sick. Although much of

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the work was routine, like counting persons into and out of the dining hall, it was also possible to attend staff meetings where patients were evaluated for being discharged. Violent behavior on the ward was not uncommon. The schedule provided one day off per week. On these occasions I went to New York or Philadelphia to attend lectures and various cultural events. I attended Riverside Church on several occasions to hear the controversial liberal theologian Harry Emerson Fosdick, who occasionally spoke favorably of conscientious objectors. I learned not to visit Elizabeth Voth, a retired Mennonite missionary, at her home on Wednesday because on that day she was on her knees praying the entire day. On entering the home, one was obliged to kneel with her for the rest of the day.

I began to write more articles for publication. My reading included philosophy, psychology, and religion. When I traveled by bus or rail, I often saw small blue pamphlets on magazine racks about superstition, witchcraft, and bundling among the Amish and Mennonites. I traced these pamphlets to their source, A. Monroe Aurand, a publisher in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and started a prolonged crusade to eliminate their distribution. I concluded that they sold well because nothing better was offered on the book racks. Alfred Shoemaker of Franklin and Marshall College challenged me to write something more authentic. In response I eventually, in later years, wrote *Amish Life*, then *Mennonite Life*, and *Hutterite Life*.

As the war grew more intense, conscientious objectors became more critical of the U.S. government, and of the churches for cooperating with a government at war. Passive resistance was not enough. Some socially active draftees began mental hospital reform. Others sought to enter foreign relief service. I began a modest enterprise of my own by visiting public libraries in large cities to examine their holdings on Christian pacifism. I offered free copies of selected books on pacifism, church history, and community life to libraries that did not have such volumes. I visited all thirty-six free Carnegie libraries in Philadelphia and many in New York and Newark. I accomplished this on my weekly day off while serving as an orderly in a mental hospital. I purchased the books myself from very meager savings and later persuaded the publishers to donate them.

After a year of hospital work, I volunteered to become a caretaker in a human guinea pig experiment for the study of atypical pneumonia. Conscientious objectors were given the opportunity to offer themselves as subjects in the study of typhus, malaria, jaundice, and nutrition. The pneumonia experiment was under the direction of Majors T. J. Abernethy and N. L. Cressy of the Army Medical Corps. The purpose

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of the experiment was to find out the cause, prevention, and treatment of atypical pneumonia and other types of colds. Experiments with animals, monkeys, rats, and rabbits had proved fruitless for establishing how the disease is transmitted. The experiment was conducted at Pinehurst, North Carolina, a golfing center where a seventy-five-room residential hotel, Holly Inn, was leased by the medical scientists. Fifty volunteers and ten caretakers were required. For men who were digging post holes or building roadways and were wanting to find work of greater humanitarian importance during the war, the opportunity was very attractive. Each of the men had an individual room, equipped with bath, telephone, writing desk, and furniture, along with opportunity for study and amusement. Regular hotel meals were served in the rooms. Books on a wide range of subjects were available from Duke University library.

As caretakers, we served the fifty volunteers with food trays, laundry supplies, games, books, and magazines. Strict isolation was important. Books or objects could not be passed from one room to another without first exposing the object to fresh air and sunshine. Sixteen of the seventy-eight men contracted atypical pneumonia and a number of others developed colds.

Half of the group had been exposed to the disease. Their throats had been sprayed with infectious material obtained from patients with atypical pneumonia. All of the men recovered completely, most of them within a week after exposure. The results, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, proved that atypical pneumonia spread like an infection and could be transmitted.

Once discharged from conscientious objector service, I completed my college work at Goshen College in two summers and one academic year. Although interested in history, I chose to major in Bible, then I switched to sociology. While an undergraduate, I served as assistant to Dean Harold S. Bender in the preparation of the four-volume *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. One of my assignments was to write articles on the Amish and related groups. This association acquainted me with the history and social dynamics of the various Mennonite groups. Not until I entered graduate school did I discover anthropology—and what an exciting discipline it is. Sociology as practiced in America was obsessed with quantification and by its very nature tended to skirt values and to fragment human groups. Its emphasis was making generalizations about the obvious. Anthropology by contrast put into holistic perspective the entire range of elements in a functioning human community. I was attracted to Penn State University because it was near my native valley in central Pennsylvania, and I was attracted to the

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research and career of William Mather, a sociologist who prodded the social conscience of both the scientific community and the religious institutions. His observations were widely disseminated in the news media.

William Mather, a direct descendant of Cotton Mather, founder of Yale College, was my adviser and dissertation chairman at the Pennsylvania State University. He occasionally traveled to Washington, D.C., to testify before legislative bodies. He took the bus to Lewistown, then rode the train. Although he regularly discussed the weekly Uniform Sunday School lessons on a local radio station on Saturday night, he was described as a liberal. He occasionally took delight in helping people learn to doubt. For example, he would talk about human evolutionary origins in the presence of creationists. He organized week-long conferences for rural pastors on the Penn State campus. The emphasis was on bringing up-to-date research findings as they relate to the work of the local parish. On one occasion Mather invited H. Richard Niebuhr from Yale as a keynote speaker. He arranged that I should meet Niebuhr at the railway station in Lewistown. We spent a pleasant afternoon together speaking about the Mennonites and Amish, a topic on which I could inform him. That evening we sat together at a soda fountain in the State College drugstore eating sundaes and talking about his favorite topic, the sociology of knowledge.

My college transcript from Goshen College was somewhat lacking in science courses, so that I could not be accepted into the Arts and Science Graduate School without taking undergraduate courses to fill this deficiency. Mather suggested that I apply for admission to the School of Agriculture instead. Here I was accepted. First I was to register for a master of arts degree. I chose to do my thesis on "The Amish Family in Mifflin County." I lived in Big Valley during the summer and collected my data there. My wife, Hazel, and I rented a large empty farmhouse from Ben Glick for twelve dollars per month.

My oral examination committee consisted of Mather, sociologist Roy Buck, and Maurice Mook, an anthropologist. Mook gave me a difficult time in the oral exam by demanding a precise definition of *assimilation*. He insisted that I use precise terms, which he said were essential to the definition. Finally he phrased the definition himself: "Assimilation is culture change due to culture contact." What attracted my committee most about my thesis was the decorative folk art I had found among Amish families.

Maurice Mook (pronounced like *book*) was the first anthropologist on the faculty at Penn State. He came from the University of Missouri at Columbia in the year that I began graduate studies. In his effort to

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broaden my knowledge, Mather suggested I take a course in anthropology. I did not know what anthropology was. Following the introductory course, I took all the anthropology courses the university offered.

Mook's course "Folk Society" met every Monday night. There were ten of us, including Margaret Matson, Francis Ianni, Joe Bentivego, and others whom I have since forgotten. Ianni later published a book on the mafia. Mook told me ahead of time that I was to speak up in the class, for he wanted to learn all he could about the Amish people. He had us read Robert Redfield's article, "The Folk Society" (*American Journal of Sociology*, 1947), which became a benchmark for comparing everything we discussed in class. Did the Amish have art? Dance? What was their language? Were they self-sufficient? Did they use barter or money? Did they have a kinship system? And in all of these ways did they represent the opposite of industrial society? Other students discussed other folk societies. Yet it seemed that we discussed the Amish as if they were the most important topic in the course.

My professional interest in American community behavior, the Amish and related Anabaptist groups in particular, began with my professors who kept asking questions. They and the wide world are still asking questions, and I am still giving answers.

I began by writing articles for publication. My first book, *Annotated Bibliography on the Amish*, appeared in print when I was still a student. I had submitted the manuscript to the publisher before I enrolled at Penn State. Mather suggested that I enter the book for the annual Chicago Folklore Prize offered by the University of Chicago. The prize was fifty dollars. I won.

The word *education* as used in American society is regarded with suspicion by most Amish people. To them it signifies ego advancement, independence, and cutting the ties that bind one to the community of faith and work. For almost a half century the Amish expressed their opposition to forced attendance in high school, an education they said would destroy their communities. Finally, in 1972 the Amish were exonerated from forced attendance at schools beyond the elementary grades. I fully supported their cause in my testimony before the courts (*U.S. Wisconsin v. Yoder*) even though I personally had been compelled to exceed Amish constraints on education.

While under cross-examination by Attorney John William Calhoun of the attorney general's office in the state of Wisconsin, he turned his swivel chair closer to me and asked: "Now, Professor, don't you think that a person needs to have an education to get ahead in the world?"

I pondered the question and replied: "It all depends on which world."

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Over the past three centuries the Amish and other Anabaptist groups have been suspended between two opposing forces: the political forces that would eliminate ethnicity from the face of the earth and those human communities who regard ethnicity as a natural and necessary extension of the familial bonds that integrate human activities. Caught between these forces, the "plain" people have sometimes prospered and sometimes suffered for their faith.

Those who would eliminate diversity argue that ethnicity is restrictive, narrow, corruptible, and fraught with nepotism and family jealousies. To totalitarian state systems, ethnic communities are often viewed as disruptive and evil. Such thinking, in effect, asks "queer people" to speak one language, obey all regulations, and get "cleaned up like the rest of us."

The role of the public school system is to facilitate uniformity and to provide preparation for those seeking to participate in mainstream American culture. However, for ethnic and religious groups who think of themselves as "strangers in the land" and who conscientiously reject certain contemporary values and reject specific aspects of modern technology, the expanding role of public school is threatening. Today the Amish are quietly developing a school system that is integrated with their way of life. The Amish schools protect their youth from alienation inherent in the loss of community life and generally produce stable, dedicated adults who are productive members in both their faith community and in American society.

Faith communities in America function as mediating structures in the pluralistic makeup of our society. They check the excesses of heavy-handed bureaucracies. Healthy ethnic communities make members feel specifically bound and responsible to others. Even though sometimes limiting, such communities can be ennobling, supporting, therapeutic, and satisfying. These communities are an extension of familial love, informing us who we are, where we come from, and what is distinctive about us.

The Amish and others who settled in America generally found the essential conditions to form communities and to practice the free exercise of religion. They found for the most part a right that Justice Louis Brandeis called "the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized man," a right Americans should be proud to protect—the right to be left alone.

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Earthy Pleasures

Ronald Wallace

The young cat, a dervish
of fur, plagues
the old cat, a dishrag
of familiarity. The young cat
is perpetually leaping
on the old cat's back,
harassing its dreamy nights,
flaying its misplaced days.
They race around the house,
pursued and pursuer,
in some ancient assignment
of catch and fetch.
The old cat could, of course,
bat the young cat
into kingdom come,
but it won't, for reasons
locked deep in the species.
Instead, it occasionally
commandeers a ladder-back chair
and from there
taps at the young cat
as if in a child's game of
I got you last,
the young cat humbling
itself, turning its vulnerable
belly up for the slapping,
the old cat an indifferent deity.

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Lewis Carroll notwithstanding,
cats never smile, their
expressions stolid, unchanging.
Is there pleasure for them
in this? Or frustration? Or just
nothing—an occasion like
breathing or salivating. Does
the sunflower lust for life?
Does burdock cower
at the sound of the decapitating scythe?
Does the dark earth shudder
at how hard we work
to put it and us asunder?

✪ RONALD WALLACE directs the creative writing program at the University of Wisconsin and is the editor of the University of Wisconsin poetry series. His most recent books are *The Makings of Happiness* and *Vital Signs: Contemporary American Poetry from the University Presses.*

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Galilee

(A seaport town in Connecticut)

Daniel Tobin

—Now that my father's dead, I've come again
To Galilee, combing inside the little shops
For some trace of him among the knickknacks
He loved to browse: silver-dollar corals,
Conch shells, chintzy boats-in-bottles,
Driftwood, "the moon's" brightly polished stones

Swept up by waves, dipped in shellac.
It's March, off-season, the sun
A pale coin burnt on the horizon's
Wash of cloud. I pace the Beach Road
Past shingled inns, their windows boarded
For squalls, hoping to glimpse his back

Among the dunes—the way I did that summer
Years ago, just out of college, already lost.
We hardly spoke. I'd witnessed the cost
Of disappointment on his face: inhewn lines
Webbing his cheeks and brow, bulging temple veins.
A brief weekend escape from the grind. He looked older,

His shoulders sloping where he stared into the sea,
My mother beside him, ankle-deep in blowing sand—
A lost tribe's totems blinded by wind,
So frail the slightest gust could topple them.
He waved me over. Against the tattered scrim
Of Point Judith, we watched as the packed ferry

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Shoaled towards the pier, tourists back from the Vineyard
Gathered for shore. He wanted to take that boat
The next day, but didn't. His reticence was rote—
Rarely risking the least unseen prospect
For the promise of some larger contentment:
"I've always rolled with the punches." One day his heart

Stopped. For months I wondered what his mind
Held in that moment. Was it knife-thrust
Or the cold diffusion of this sea? What faces
Shattered there? So much I didn't know
Of him, so much of me I closeted in shadow.
I still feel my mother's nails clawed into my hand.

In Galilee now, I watch as the winter ferry thuds
Into the Sound, only a few perched at the rails,
Braving the marbled water. Through clouds, the failed
Sun whitens deeper into the gathered mist.
Scraps like ash wash in with the tide. I wait
For what light there is to walk towards me on the waves.

✪ DANIEL TOBIN is an assistant professor of English at Carthage College in Wisconsin.

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John Sparrow

The Warden of All Souls

JOHN LOWE

John Sparrow made five visits to the United States. In 1941, an officer in the Coldstream Guards, he spent six months in Washington as aide-de-camp to Lieutenant-General Sir Colville Wemyss, head of the joint staff mission. In 1963 he set out on an ill-fated bibliographical tour, to include talks to the Grolier Club in New York and the "Odd Volumes" in Boston. He gave a successful talk to the Grolier Club at the Morgan Library but, while leaving, slipped down a staircase and severely damaged one knee. He flew home immediately for an operation in Oxford. There was much gnashing of teeth in and around the Houghton Library.

His last two visits, made just before and just after his retirement from the wardenship, were to the University of Chicago in 1976 and 1978. His host was the Committee on Social Thought, which invited him on each occasion for three months, to give a course of lectures and to talk informally to interested students.

Quite apart from these visits, John had many American friends. There were book collectors, scholars with common interests, and others who were simply friends. There were also a number of American academics who came as visiting fellows to All Souls. All of them received that warm welcome that made John's hospitality memorable. It is probably true to say that these various experiences left John with no particular love of America, but with a fondness for a large number of individual Americans.

I knew John Sparrow for just over forty years. In this essay, partly a personal tribute, partly a more objective appraisal of John's career and his writings, I hope I may revive memories for those Americans who knew him. And, so much harder, conjure up a lively impression of this clever and most charming man for those who never had the pleasure of enjoying his company, his learning, his kindness, and a humor that became legendary in his own lifetime.

Some of my opinions may seem controversial, causing some readers to disagree, even to disapprove. So be it! John delighted in controversy, and, should it continue to surround his memory, he might find it the most pleasing among his obsequies.

John Hanbury Angus Sparrow was born in 1906, on the outskirts of Wolverhampton, in the English industrial Midlands. His grandfather and his great-uncle had been renowned and extremely wealthy ironmasters in the middle of the nineteenth century, but the business had been sold before John was born. John's father, Isaac Sparrow, was an unambitious barrister, practicing on the Midlands circuit, and—his only distinction in John's eyes—a director of the Wolverhampton Wanderers football club. John never had a good word for his father, an indifference he would never explain. His love centered on his mother, who, without any show of favoritism, admired him most of her two sons and three daughters.

Margaret McGregor came of a Scottish highland family, who some time before had come south to Birmingham to find work. Margaret graduated from St. Andrew's University in the late nineteenth century, an achievement for a woman at that time. She was intelligent, interested in women's liberation, but even more in household and nursery management, and she was a good mother to all her children.

✪ JOHN LOWE, formerly director of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the Weald and Downland Museum, as well as founding principal of West Dean College, is the author of *The Warden: A Portrait of John Sparrow*.

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She left behind essays she had written on a variety of subjects. The most fascinating is a description of John's childhood, which she probably wrote when he was about eleven. It contains delightful nursery stories, all of which, in one way or another, seem to predict John's future and suggest that John knew his own mind at a most precocious age.

On one occasion she took John, aged five, to a ladies' tea party in Wolverhampton. John was largely ignored, but as they were leaving and he was struggling into his heavy overcoat, one patronizing lady called to him, "And what is the little man going to be; a barrister like his Daddy?" From the depths of the overcoat came a voice, "And a great poet!"

John's mother lived to over ninety years of age, well into his wardenship of All Souls. Mother and son never ceased to exchange letters once or twice a week, right up to her death. They are nearly all preserved, and John's letters provide a good substitute for a diary he never kept, telling his mother about the interesting people he had met and his opinions of them; occasionally he wrote frankly to her about his most personal feelings. His mother adored John, but she was shrewd, unpossessive, and gently critical when she thought John misguided. John returned this love, which never dimmed to the day he died. He spoke often of how much she had taught him, above all, the importance of people.

John was sent to boarding school, at the urging of his father and with the disapproval of his mother, when he was barely eight. He acquired more distinction as a good storyteller and a useful member of the football team than as a promising pupil. But to everyone's surprise, he won a scholarship to Winchester, then as now, renowned for its high academic standard. His Winchester reports have survived. Classics were of paramount importance, leading to the supreme test of Greats at Oxford. John consistently got excellent reports for English and French, but so failed to shine at Latin and Greek that his teachers began to doubt if he would win a scholarship to Oxford.

The headmaster's reports suggested a worrying tendency in Sparrow "to diversify his interests." In plainer language, he was not giving all his attention to Latin and Greek; or worse, he was becoming a dilettante. The cause of this alarm was the poet John Donne. John was already a serious book collector by the age of thirteen and, browsing in a Wolverhampton bookshop, he bought a third edition of Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, which he later edited with the help of Geoffrey Keynes, the distinguished bibliographer of Donne. It was published by the Cambridge University Press one month after his sixteenth birthday. He was also helped in this by Dean Hutton, then dean of Winchester. His letters to John show him an ally against the schoolmasters and the classical regime of Winchester. It is sufficient to say at this point that if John had written nothing but this introduction, he would have earned himself some lasting reputation.

John won a scholarship to New College, and at his final prize giving, he was the only boy to receive four prizes. John had been happy at Winchester. But he found wider horizons and more sympathetic friends at Oxford, both of which encouraged the development of his talents. His work was dominated by his tutor in classical philosophy, H. W. B. Joseph, a taskmaster in logical thinking. Some found Joseph's exacting standards too demanding; John thrived on them and became Joseph's favorite pupil.

John's friendship with Maurice Bowra, then a young fellow at Wadham, provided a hedonistic antidote to what A. L. Rowse has called "the logic-chopping training" of Joseph. Bowra's influence over John, which John always happily acknowledged, was not limited to their deep personal relationship. Bowra's friends had a great influence on John. Cyril (later Lord) Radcliffe shaped his legal career: John Betjeman was his closest literary friend: Harold Nicolson taught him wordly wisdom: Sylvester Gates gave him values that he always prized. John also made his own friends among contemporaries and older academics. He worked hard, he continued to play soccer, and he began to earn a reputation for the wit and humor that was to mark him out for the rest of his life.

There was one bad moment. His first-class degree was taken for granted. Joseph was dismayed when he learned that his best pupil was to be summoned for a *viva*, usually a sign that a man's papers left him hovering between a first and a second. The interviewing committee gave John his first. In a letter from Joseph, which lists the marks for John's papers, all was made clear. John was a brilliant Latinist, but he was weaker in Greek, particularly Greek history, for

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which he had only gained a *beta plus*. This demanded some explanation from someone in the first class. To confirm that he was indeed in that class, John went on to win the Chancellor's prize for Latin verse, the Eldon Scholarship, and, in the autumn of 1929, a prize fellowship at All Souls College, then as now, the supreme academic attainment at Oxford.

An academic career was open to John, but he decided to read for the bar. He became Cyril Radcliffe's pupil and joined his chambers at 3 New Court, one of the most distinguished at the Chancery Bar. He was called to the bar in 1931—a member of the Middle Temple—and began to earn a reputation for his skill in drafting opinions and other documents. His contemporary, Lord Wilberforce, remembers that John was "timid in court." In or out of court, John found the work exacting.

John enjoyed his life in London during the thirties. The law gave him intellectual excitement, but it remained a game more than a vocation. He enjoyed the fellowship of the bar and became a close friend of Cyril Radcliffe, who, he said later, taught him to place a proper value on himself. He also found time to exercise his literary talents and to pursue his skill as a scholarly book collector. He wrote one or two books, reviewed regularly for the *Times Literary Supplement*, and enjoyed current literary controversies, making friends with such writers as Edith Sitwell and Geoffrey Grigson. On the weekends he returned to Oxford to enjoy the life of All Souls or, with his growing reputation for intelligence and wit, was a guest at various country houses. "Where is that clever Mr. Partridge?" inquired one of his hostesses.

It was a divided life. The Chancery Bar satisfied his analytical mind. London provided for his literary interests and his fondness for non-academic company, while All Souls kept him in touch with Oxford. He had the best of all worlds and, at that time, no need to make a choice between them.

In 1939 everything was brought to a halt by the outbreak of war. John joined the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry as a private soldier. He liked barrack-room life and determined to stay in the ranks. When his friends wrote, concerned with the terrible deprivations he must be suffering, he replied to one, "My only hardship so far has been to watch my friend, Corporal Haydock, eating shepherd's pie covered in apricot jam."

Before long, his commanding officer insisted that he undergo officer training. John became an officer in the Coldstream Guards. On returning from a posting in Washington, he enjoyed a short period of regimental duties, among them guarding Churchill at Chequers. He was then seconded to the War Office to join the newly formed morale committee. For the rest of the war, John toured every battle front from Italy and Germany to India and Burma, compiling reports that showed a deep understanding of the private soldier. He ended his wartime career as a lieutenant-colonel and was awarded an O.B.E.

John returned to the Chancery Bar where, with the promotion of Cyril Radcliffe to a Lord of Appeal, he became head of his chambers. He settled back to his work, but doubts were growing in his mind about the direction his future should take. The law stimulated his mind, but did it satisfy the whole man? He was still drawn to literature and a more creative life.

It was at this time, early in 1951, that I first met John, when I was an undergraduate at New College. I hope I may be forgiven if I break into the account of his life with a few personal memories of John during that year when he was faced with the chance of becoming Warden of All Souls. John delighted generations of undergraduates—perhaps not the bearded ones—and his friendship enriched my time at Oxford, as it has enriched the rest of my life. John was good with the young and good for them, a natural teacher. With two New College friends, I started visiting John in All Souls each Saturday evening when he came down to Oxford. We met at nine, after he had dined in hall, but it was typical of his thoughtfulness that he always left a decanter of claret for us, in case he was delayed.

They were magical evenings, made up of laughter and poetry. John allowed his romantic tastes free rein, and besides Donne and Yeats, we had lots of Tennyson and, his special favorite, Christina Rossetti. I would rather hear John read poetry or prose than anyone else I have ever known. He had a most charming voice matched by a perfect ear for the rhythms of language. In such informal teaching, he encouraged us by setting irresistably high standards, and by a judicious use of flattery, not aimed to swell the head, but

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more subtly, to bolster self-confidence. Beyond everything, literature came alive as we listened to John talk, read, and discuss his favorite writers, and we began to share in his fascination with words.

Like John, though with none of his learning, I was a youthful book collector. I noticed a collection of novels by the fine Belfast writer Forrest Reid on his shelves. I had collected his books since my school days. When I told John that I had this small collection, he asked if he might see them, and we arranged to meet in my rooms the following afternoon. John went straight to the bookcase and in silence worked his way through what I realized suddenly was a large collection. With knowledge and a certain serendipity, John pulled out the rarest items and the association copies. In youthful embarrassment, I could stand the silence no longer. "I'm afraid there's nothing special," I mumbled.

John turned and assumed what I was to recognize later as his look of mock severity. At that moment, it looked rather real. "They're much better than mine," he seemed to grumble.

"Not really. They . . . "

"Very much better than mine." Then John's face broke into a mischievous grin. "Well done," he said, and at that moment I felt I had been accepted as a serious book collector and, perhaps, as a friend.

Later that year, John invited me to join him in Venice for two weeks. By then Humphrey Sumner, Warden of All Souls, had died suddenly, and Hubert Henderson had been elected, only to fall seriously ill a few days later. The Oxford air and John's mind were full of election fever. But in August, John and I met in Padua and went on to Venice.

Venice was one of the passions of John's life. His first enthusiasm was probably aroused by his friend, the novelist L. P. Hartley, who loved Venice enough to have taken lessons in rowing a gondola. John's enthusiasm never reached that pitch, but in the second half of his life it became his favorite city. No memoir of John would be complete without some account of his Venetian days.

John had rented the *piano nobile* of the small Palazzo Bonlini, again on Hartley's recommendation. It was beside a quiet canal near the Zattere. The palazzo had one slight disadvantage, the owner. Mrs. Somers-Cocks sat like a concierge in a small room on the ground floor, and it was difficult to get past her sharp ear and eye without being detained for an hour while she gave a detailed account of her last lone walking tour across Russia, or the one she was about to make across Portugal. All this despite her being eighty and a fragile birdlike old woman. Once we reached the safety of the upper floor, John gave irreverent imitations of her, but fortunately she left for Portugal a few days after our arrival.

John shone in Venice. His mind seemed to take on a new liveliness, matched by relentless energy. He enjoyed all the little snobberies of the cognoscente—never losing his way; those private shortcuts; strange sights like the gas works that others ignored; and, of course, that little trattoria where one never saw tourists. Otherwise, we walked and we talked endlessly. John told fascinating stories and gave accounts, sometimes waspish, of his friends Betjeman, Bowra, Cyril Radcliffe. But he was never a monologist. He liked conversation, and he encouraged one to talk by listening. I did not feel overwhelmed by his powerful intellect since it was lightened by his thoughtfulness, his charm, and his mischievous humor. His company in those light moods was intoxicating.

John had been a candidate in the first election for the wardenship, following Sumner's death, but he only collected four votes. When Henderson died later in 1951 and there had to be a second election, John was again a contestant. Throughout both elections John never ceased to say that he was undecided about leaving the bar. But this was no more than a ritualistic statement. From the day that Sumner died, though John protested that "two Sparrows don't make a Sumner," he had set his heart on the wardenship. He was extremely disappointed when defeated by Henderson. As he said to me, years later, in a more honest mood, "How could one refuse the wardenship of All Souls?"

John would not have become Warden except for the ill fate that overtook others. Sumner's death was unexpected, and in the first election, the historian Richard Pares would almost certainly have been chosen, had not his doctors advised him to withdraw. The death of Hubert Henderson was against all the odds, and some say that, in the second election, many of the votes cast for John were cast to keep A. L. Rowse out.

John was elected Warden on March 1, 1952 and, far from wavering, took up office imme-

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diately. Those who had been close to him during the two elections breathed a sigh of relief. The endless "Shall I? Shan't I?" had become exhausting as one struggled to find meaningful answers to a meaningless question. Looking through the dozens of letters expressing unreserved delight that John received after his election, I found only two expressing some doubt. They were from his mother and myself. In different ways, we both expressed the same fear of a life that imposed little discipline and had no deadlines.

John's wardenship lasted twenty-five years. It was a controversial time for All Souls. It is difficult to pass judgment on John's term of office in a few paragraphs, and infinitely difficult for an outsider. To understand the situation at all, one must recognize two elements that influenced all of John's actions as Warden. John had already been a fellow for twenty-three years. All Souls was his favorite club and, the most clubable man, he saw no reason to change it. Second, while John had respect for some higher scholarship, he had neither sympathy for nor understanding of academic life and little real interest in the contribution that All Souls should be making to the intellectual life of Oxford. He was conscientious about college business and frequently refused attractive invitations because he had to attend a college meeting. Perhaps he was anxious lest changes were made in his absence.

If John failed as a policymaker, he was the perfect host and father of his college, except that he allowed dislike of certain colleagues to show. He saw life in terms of individuals and lacked that dispassionate corporate loyalty necessary to the head of any institution. All Souls was his club, and he saw no reason to be agreeable to members he did not like. Fortunately, he liked most of them, fellows and visiting fellows and, despite grumblings offstage, he was utterly charming to *all* his guests on ladies' nights.

Trouble began in 1960, when a newspaper disclosed that All Souls was not only one of the richest colleges in Oxford but, contrary to the conduct of an educational trust, was reinvesting some £25,000 of income each year, a large sum of money then. The majority of colleges were short of money, and inevitably this disclosure increased the existing prejudice that All Souls had grown fat on doing nothing, either by teaching or research. The situation came to a head when the Franks Commission, examining the whole university at that time, summoned John to appear before it to explain how All Souls was going to use its revenues more usefully.

John was masterly, undaunted, and not a little Machiavellian. He procrastinated through endless college meetings, allowing the fellows to debate four possible schemes, none of which John had any intention of implementing. The younger fellows were eager for change; the older mostly supported John's strategy to maintain the status quo. In the simplest terms, the four schemes were: to give away money to needy colleges (this was done in a few cases); to increase the number of research fellows; to establish a scheme for visiting fellows; or to change the nature of the college by introducing a body of postgraduate students. The last was favored by the younger radical fellows and was anathema to the Warden. The necessary building would occupy half of his garden. It was the only occasion when he reminded his colleagues that the statutes gave him the power of veto. This debate, within and without the college, went on for more than two years. Finally, because of outside pressure, John could procrastinate no longer. He had made promises that he had not kept, and, for better or worse, the fellows voted for the visiting fellows scheme. If nothing else, John could console himself that this hare had drawn the pack away from the odious possibility of disrupting the college with a new building and hirsute postgraduate students. And after all, one could use the visiting fellows scheme to slip in a few deserving, if not wholly academic friends, as temporary members of the club.

To this day, opinions are divided about what the college should have done. Speaking to present and ex-fellows, I find that there is no consensus still. A number favor the visiting fellows scheme and feel it has worked well. Others feel that this scheme has diluted the intellectual purpose of the college and that a general raising of standards, with the creation of more research fellowships, would have been the right answer. It is interesting to note that the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, in adopting a visiting fellows scheme, has faced several of the same problems as All Souls, though they have tackled them with more energy.

Within All Souls I have met nobody who re-

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grets rejection of the postgraduate scheme and the talk of some kind of affiliation with St. Anthony's College. The scheme seems less significant today with the increase in postgraduate places in Oxford since 1960. Outside All Souls, particularly among the younger university lecturers, the visiting fellows scheme has done little to remove the old prejudice that All Souls is a place where fellows are paid a lot for doing very little.

John retired from the wardenship in 1977. He had no house and had made no practical provision for his retirement, no doubt hoping that he would be allowed to remain in college. The thought of leaving was unbearable to him. The college compromised by offering him the ground floor of an attractive house it owned in Iffley. John accepted, but it was not a success. Loneliness, a growing worry that his memory was failing, and the difficulties of adjusting to retirement led him into a phase of drinking too much. I remember visiting him for the day at Beechwood House. By ten A.M. his scout had left and John sat at his desk doing little except casting frequent glances at the bottle of Cinzano on a nearby table. In the evening, he would take a taxi to dine in All Souls, where, as he drank more, the scenes he made became worse. Part of the tragedy is that those few years did irreparable harm to John's reputation.

Saddest of all, John could have enjoyed a happy retirement doing what he liked doing best and did so well. He had already acquired a reputation as an outstanding broadcaster through his charming talks for the BBC. The producers had plans for more, but his scripts arrived later and later, until he was dropped. He received other invitations—to lecture, to edit, and to write books, but people grew tired of his unreliability. Even close friends ceased to visit him, increasing his loneliness.

John's first visit to Chicago, which he enjoyed enormously, was a great success. His lectures, *Too Much of a Good Thing*, a critical view of liberty, equality, and fraternity, were well received and published. These visits might have become a stimulating part of his life for several years, but the second visit went wrong. John was going to pieces; he became confused about his last lecture, and he failed to deliver the manuscript for publication. Chicago, with sadness, did not invite him again.

John had become a sick man.Yet, when he began to be looked after properly, he ceased to drink in a short time. But by then he had lost much of his memory and had truly become an old man. This wretched story has a happier ending. Out of nowhere came a nurse, Inge Gerstl, who by her kindness and her intelligence soon captured John's affections. She also thought that John's social life was as important as any medical care, and she cooked endlessly for his visitors. John's last years were comfortable and contented. I stayed with him for a month each year, and, despite his fragmentary memory, I much enjoyed his company. He liked mine, because I was the only friend left who could tell him all his own stories.

It has become commonplace to say that John wrote very little, and that, not very scholarly. But if one looks at the complete works of Sparrow, filling a long shelf, they contradict this opinion. The trouble is that John did not write, and did not want to write, the kind of books that the world expected from the Warden of All Souls. Worse, he was so versatile; it confirmed those early fears of his headmaster. He had become a dilettante. And there is a further complaint: his books were too short. But many books are too long. John never bored us.

John did produce some scholarly work. His youthful introduction to Donne's *Devotions* analyzed with maturity this difficult, semi-mystical book and, with a convincing understanding of Donne, explained the relatonship between the young poet's profane love and his later sacred passion. The book earned appreciative reviews from two leading critics of the day, Edmund Gosse and George Saintsbury.

John was an accomplished Latin scholar. He had a notable collection of books of Renaisance Latin verse (now given to All Souls) that led to a definitive anthology (1979), which he edited with his friend Alessandra Perosa. Classicists also admire his early publication, *Half-lines and Repetitions in Virgil* (1931). He loved the economy of Latin inscriptions, which he collected. The best were published in the eight volumes of *Lapidaria* (1943–75), handsomely produced by Stanley Morrison and John's great friend, the engraver, Reynolds Stone.

His scholarship was not limited to his classical publications. It could emerge in a review or an article, where his fluent style transformed it from academic journalism to a polished essay. In his review of R. W. Chapman's edition of *Samuel Johnson's Letters*, his perceptive appreciation of Chapman's learning, editorial skill, and perfect

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understanding of his subject made a panegyric to fine scholarship.

John's essays ranged over a variety of subjects. The best were published in *Independent Essays* (1963) and *Controversial Essays* (1966). John sought out controversial subjects and applied his mind to them as if they were a brief. His most controversial essay did, indeed, center on the celebrated *Lady Chatterley's Lover* obscenity trial, at which a number of distinguished literary figures stood in the witness box and declared that the book was not only pure, but also great. John was indignant at what he saw as muddled thinking and, worse, liberal hypocrisy. His article in *Encounter* (1961) demonstrates convincingly that the novel centered on an act of sodomy. There was much gunfire in the literary world, but John's case was never refuted.

Philip Howard, a discriminating critic of style, described John as the last English essayist. The leisurely essay, enjoyed as much for its style as for its content, is out of fashion. John wrote marvelous prose, with fine Latin bones, its rhythms a gentle oratory and the language drawn from a mind attuned to the finest writing in the English language. He believed in logical argument expressed with clarity and simplicity. His own writing was a model of these principles, some of which he discussed in delightful talks on the BBC, later published as as *Words on the Air* (1981).

John would have chosen to be a creative artist, above all, a great poet. On occasions, he was more creative than he realized. Of all his work, I like best *Mark Pattison and the Idea of a University* (1967), originally given as the Clark Lectures at Cambridge in 1965. Pattison had fascinated John ever since he had found a copy of his *Memoirs* in the library of his father's club. John collected Pattison's papers and studied the material in the Bodleian. His own account of this sad, unlovable, yet admirable man is told with great sensitivity, and he plays with the reader's sympathies like a skilled novelist. Many had hoped that long study of Pattison would result in his magnum opus. I think that the small book contains the best of John on Pattison and is his best book. My only regret is that it has not been reprinted.

Among his many gifts, John was a superb editor, particularly of poetry. All his literary friends were eager for his advice, none more than his old friend, John Betjeman. John edited and wrote an introduction to Betjeman's first *Complete Poems*. John was a stern critic, refusing to include poems admired by Betjeman, and not above rewriting a verse now and then. John Betjeman seldom argued. His faith in his friend was as deep as his affection. Strangely, John never lost his editorial faculties. Two years ago, I asked him if he would be willing to look through the typescript of a biography I had written about a contemporary of his at Oxford. I thought he would toy with it. The typescript came back with suggestions on almost every page, particularly about punctuation, every one of which I accepted. John was the master of the comma.

John's library and his bibliographic knowledge were admired on both sides of the Atlantic. Like most things in John's life, the serious side was frequently invaded by pure fun. I am not qualified to express opinions about many of John's earlier books, particularly his superb holding of seventeenth-century writers. John and I met on the common ground of our love of nineteenth-century poetry. And we admired those heavily decorated bindings of the 1860s. John had two copies of *Enoch Arden*, a rope pattern on the binding, and each a different color. My single copy was in yet another color. The race was on. We searched bookshops everywhere to gain the most different colored editions. I forget who won, but we enjoyed ourselves.

The man? Ah, how difficult! It is impossible to draw a portrait of John that would satisfy everyone who knew him. He was so different to different people. His inner circle of friends enjoyed the best of him. A servant in All Souls once said to me, "He was a difficult old bugger, but we always forgave him." John's nature made him controversial in private as well as public life.

John was short but well built. When he became older and more thickset, his friend Janet Stone said, "John is *square*, in every sense of that word." The press liked to represent him as Oxford's pillar of the Establishment. He was innately conservative, and in public he liked to side with unfashionable views, some not very sensible. But there was often an element of teasing in these public attitudes, which did not wholly represent the man.

In earlier life, though not conventionally handsome, his strong features, with that "cowlick lock of hair," celebrated by Betjeman, gave him a romantic and slightly saturnine look that reflected the wilder

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side of his nature. In old age, photographs show a somber, disillusioned look. But in life, his face was seldom in repose, full of the smiles and grins that were the essential counterpoint to his humor. His mind was analytical, not speculative. He was hardly interested in philosophy or religion, but, a skeptic, his beliefs were based on his experience of life. He was saved from cynicism by his deep interest in people of all kinds and his humor and sense of fun.

John was a homosexual. He never flaunted it, and he hardly troubled to conceal it. To him, it was his natural state, and to others it was natural to John. Any consideration of his character would be meaningless if it ignored this side of his nature. His homosexuality was central to his character, coloring his attitudes to everyone and everything. He had his passions and the appetites that sprung from them. These he satisfied with discretion and typical pragmatism.

Among his close friends, many the most uxorious of men, he had no secrets, and homosexuality was the frequent subject of his conversation and many of his jokes. This side of his nature produced a feminine sensitivity and some malice and vanity. There was also a selfishness in him that could make him blind to the needs of those he found unsympathetic. And his temper could also flare when he was crossed. But with his cleverness, kindness, wit, and charm, he made a lasting impression on people he only met for a few hours. While in Chicago, he was invited to the University of Colorado for a weekend to talk about Pattison. Fifteen years later, I traced his host and wrote to ask him if he had any memories of the visit. The reply was a most gracious tribute to John. He had not only enchanted everyone he met, but his host was able to recall every detail of John's visit, as if he had walked out of the door five minutes earlier.

John's humor was the leaven of his charm. It ranged from every form of wordplay to good stories, sharp ripostes, and to nonsense and absurd practical jokes. I remember returning a week earlier than expected from a summer vacation in Spain. I went round to the lodgings to see John. Tea was laid out in the garden. John rubbed his hands like an eager stage manager. By chance, three close friends, all convinced I was in Andalucia, were due for tea. I was hidden behind a tree. Hardly were the guests seated when John steered the conversation toward the less-agreeable traits in my character. There were red faces when I stepped from my hiding place, and a lot of laughter.

Most of John's humor was verbal and born of a particular occasion. At the meetings of the fellows of Winchester College, as the years advanced, John was given to nodding off and snoring. Once he awoke and, looking around, said, "Gentlemen, I do hope that I have not kept you awake!" And,when he heard that the liberal Bernard Williams was a front-runner as his successor at All Souls, he exclaimed, "Good God! There will be women in here before you can say Joan Robinson," a reference, of course, to the famous English economist. And when Rowse complained that John never read his books, demanding, "Do you know Tudor Cornwall, John?" "No," replied John, touching the arm of the man on his left, "do you know Stuart Hampshire?"

John wrote some clever and delightful humorous verse, published in *Grave Epigrams* (1981). This essay would be incomplete without one poem. I shall therefore end with the epitaph that John often said he wrote for himself. Like so much of his humor, the joke is at his expense.

> Here, with his talents in a napkin hid,
> Lies one who much designed, and nothing did;
> Postponing and deferring, day by day,
> He quite procrastinated life away,
> And, when at length the summons came to die,
> With his last breath put off—mortality.

John Sparrow died peacefully in his sleep during the night of January 24, 1992, aged eighty-five.

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Being Ernest

Reflections on the Timeliness of Some Outdated Ideas

EUGEN WEBER

"A century from now, humanity will know pretty much everything that it can know about its past, and then it will be time to stop; for the nature of these studies is that, as soon as they have attained their relative perfection, they begin to demolish themselves."

Thus Ernest Renan, in 1890, introduced the text of a long essay that he had written in 1848 and left unpublished since then: *L'Avenir de la Science*. Now that a century has passed since these words were penned, now that, in 1992, a century will have passed since Renan himself died in 1892, a sick old man of sixty-seven, one may be moved to smile at the naive presumption that we shall exhaust the past—especially when we manufacture more of it every day. Yet a second thought suggests that history has advanced sufficiently to begin demolishing itself or, at least, to deconstruct. And the end of history that Renan predicted in 1890 was being affirmed in 1989, pretty much on schedule, in an article by Francis Fukuyama that has enjoyed the fifteen minutes of fame that Andy Warhol promised everybody.

So Renan was not so wrong in 1890 when he looked back to what he believed and wrote in 1848, and found that "all in all, I had been right." The progress he imagined then had, by 1890, been pretty much accomplished. History and philology had analyzed the origins of religion and put it in its place as a historical and cultural phenomenon. Religion had been replaced by science—that is, by the methodology that produced positive knowledge of nature, of time, and even of man who made the world in which he lives and made himself in it. Socialism, whose materialistic utopianism Renan had criticized in 1848, was still around. But it looked different; and (as had once happened with Christianity) the socialism that might eventually triumph would be very different from what the men of 1848 had preached.

Equalitarianism had been a dream. For one thing, "inequality and variety are the fundamental laws of the human race."A school where students rule would be a poor school indeed. But, while great inequalities subsist, everyone (said Renan) now has something, and the progress of human societies will keep reducing the number of disinherited. Here too Renan would not have been mistaken, if only he had foreseen that, while we reduced inequalities, we would reduce mortality as well, thus reducing our reductions of inequality.

Nationalism had already triumphed, but success breeds weariness. "In fifty years the national principle will be losing ground." He was not so far wrong. "Patriotism becomes local; national enthusiasm flags." What are we in the 1990s to make of these words written in 1890? As he himself expressed the certainty in 1848: "Before a century has gone past, humanity will realize its present tendencies, only to experience new needs. . . . What is sure is that no one [among us] will have been absolutely right, or absolutely wrong."

"One cannot imagine today how a whole generation (a whole generation of old young intel-

✪ EUGEN WEBER is the Joan Palevsky Professor of Modern European History at the University of California, Los Angeles. His latest book is *My France: Politics, Culture, Myth*. An earlier version of this essay was presented as the 1991 Leo Gershoy Lecture at the Center for French Civilization and Culture, New York University.

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lectuals, and of young intellectuals too) welcomed *L'Avenir de la Science*, recognized itself, glorified itself in it." This is Charles Péguy, attacking *L'Avenir* in 1906, "ce livre de fondation de la science moderne." Péguy burning what he had once adored, and attacking Renan for setting himself up as an intellectual leader, a partisan intellectual leader in the tradition of Lamartine and Victor Hugo. It is hard to imagine this rather remote scholar in that role, were it not for the concurrent testimony of a whole string of witnesses: Anatole France of course, but also Paul Bourget, Maurice Barrès, and Marcel Proust; and Jules Renard who notes the sense of loss and emptiness that Renan's death left among the young in 1892; and even Roger Martin du Gard, a quarter of whose *Jean Barois* is about problems that Renan had raised. *Jean Barois* was published on the eve of the First World War. But, in 1889 already, Paul Bourget testified (and none gainsaid him) that Renan represented "some of the most essential of the ways we think and feel."

It was hardly foreordained that a poor orphan from darkest Brittany—taciturn, dumpy, physically unprepossessing, and a scholarship boy to boot—working in the recondite realms of Semitic philology, should play such a role in his time. But Renan's public success becomes less surprising when we remember that he represents two crucial aspects of his time. Actually three, because he is a Christian who has lost his faith, so let's start with that. Fifteen years of training for the priesthood ended when he dropped out of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice at the age of twenty-two. He had read too much, and too much German science, to see the God that his masters taught as other than hypothetical. The history of Christianity, as taught at Saint-Sulpice, no longer seemed founded on fact. Its providential assumption of a God interested in humanity, active in its affairs, looked equally dubious. How, after all the concessions made to nineteenth-century science, could one tell God apart from the nature he had allegedly created, through which and through which alone he was supposed to act? God may exist, but only as if he didn't. If we cannot believe in a providential God, why then believe in God at all?

And yet, as was pointed out by Emile Faguet, who had read Renan carefully, the Christian analysis of the human heart, the medications it proposed to heal its fears and maladies, the moral hygiene that Christianity offered, were no less valid for all that. As with a lot of his contemporaries, but more so, Renan would cling to that particular aspect of the faith he shed, because he found the world, like the echoing empty nave of the disaffected cathedral of his native Tréguier, "plein d'infini et de terreur [full of infinity and terror]." The diffuse scent of incense helped him to bear his unease. That made him representative enough. Above all, though, and as characteristic, he was a historian, and he was an eclectic.

The doctoral dissertation that Renan defended in 1852 was entitled *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*. Averroès, the twelfth-century Muslim philosopher who revived and reinterpreted Aristotle, regarded reason and philosophy as superior to faith and to knowledge that claims to be based on faith. For Averroès, knowledge and science are the offspring of philosophy. For Renan, they are most closely dependent on history. Why the apparent shift? Averroès was writing in an age of faith. When they have faith, men need only faith to know where they are going. Without faith, they have to chart the future that lies behind us, locate a direction, identify a goal, in the road already covered.

Renan had lost his faith, but not his love for the God whose priests had made his education. So, Averroism fitted his situation, as it fitted his times. "The characteristic trait of the 19th century," Renan tells us in the introduction to *Averroès*, "is to have substituted the historical method to the dogmatic method in all studies that relate to the human mind." And a few lines later he proclaims that "history is the necessary form of knowledge of all that is subject to the laws of changing and successive life. . . . The great progress of [scholarly] criticism has been the substitution of the category of *becoming* to the category of *being*, the concept of the relative to the concept of the absolute, of movement to immobility."

Here, then, is history not as given but as process. This is not only yet one more proclamation of historical relativity when Romantic relativism is ruling the roost, but the verification of contemporary eclecticism, and the prediction of greater eclecticism to come—all appropriate to a man born in late February (1823) under the sign of Pisces, hence by definition *ondoyant et divers*.

By 1876, what he predicted had come to pass:

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"Once upon a time everyone had his system. He lived with it, he died with it. Today we pass successively through every system or, better still, we understand them all at once."

This suggests that by 1890 the hopeful expectations of 1848 and 1852 had become discomforting realities. Humanity had learned a lot of new things, but human destiny looked murkier than ever. Politics were "like a desert where one advances at a venture, to the North, to the South, for one has to keep moving, [but] no one knows in the social order where the right direction lies." Even more serious, the future held out no likelihood of a "catechism" more acceptable than the one that was discarded. "So it may be that the ruin of 19th century idealist beliefs [his own] will follow the ruin of supernatural beliefs." Sentiment had had its value, independent of reality, irrespective of scientific fact. Common pieties had been useful precisely because they were common—that is, integrative—and potentially improving. Now, relativism was coming home to roost, and the social morality based on dogmatic fantasies was disintegrating. Myths and idle fancies had induced "the good gorilla" [that's us] to furnish a surprising moral effort. Excise the myths and fancies, and much of the factitious energy they had evoked would vanish.

First nationalism, then communism and fascism, finally neo-fundamentalism, would draw the same conclusions and try to restore a source of factitious energy. But Renan did not guess this aspect of the future: "I tell you frankly, I do not know how we will rebuild, lacking the old dreams, the bases of a noble and a happy life. . . . Yet the happiness and nobility of man have always rested on fragile underpinnings." What to do? The question was not new; the moderation of the answer was: we can enjoy the contemplation of reality—science—which is "the satisfaction of the highest desire of our nature: curiosity."

So here are the forest murmurs of our own disarray: no sense of success, but no sense of failure either; only an enduring satisfaction in curiosity, in the pursuit of curiosity that results not only in the ultimate personal satisfaction but in knowledge, in science, which is the ultimate social good, and in creation, creativity, productivity.

Creation is an impetus as strong as curiosity, and as vital as its sister. One remembers Goethe's Faustus: "In the beginning was the word. No: strike that. In the beginning was action"—movement towards the light, towards enlightenment, existence, ascension. Renan is a historian and a philologist—an expert in the most human of creations—language, a lover of action, a lover of words. And all his actions, in the great French intellectual tradition, would be connected with words. But he is also almost a priest. So he proceeds carefully, prudently. As he said in an essay published as late as 1884, when his position seemed unassailable: "When one is not like other men, one has to beware of them"—"il faut un peu se garer d'eux." The best we can demand is tolerance. But even tolerance is limited—even for the prudent.

In 1858 Renan translates the Book of Job; in 1860 he translates the Song of Songs, presenting religious texts as literature before he goes on to present literature as history. He is elected to the chair of Hebrew at the Collège de France and, in his opening lecture there, in February 1862, he speaks of Jesus as "an incomparable man, so great that . . . I would not contradict those who, struck by the exceptional character of his works, call him God." His lectures are suspended; then, after the publication of his *Life of Jesus* in 1863 (the story, as he writes his friend Marcelin Berthelot, of a man whose trade is thaumaturgy), his chair is abolished. It isn't that the emperor, Napoleon III, let alone the empress who admired the book, wished him ill. But manifestations and counter-manifestations had to be avoided. "In France, fatally, everything takes on a political aspect." Renan considers standing for election in Paris, "plainly putting the question of scientific freedom before the people of Paris," but wisely desists and, like Flaubert's Frédéric Moreau, goes traveling instead. For the next twenty-five years he would write the history of the origins of Christianity, from Jesus and his small sect of believers to its triumph. *Les Origines du Christianisme* is a monument of exegesis and *ideengeschichte*, but also of biography and psychology, because, as a good Romantic, Renan wanted to reconstruct the past and participate in it imaginatively.

In essence, though, *Les Origines* describes a great moral crisis: the bankruptcy of antiquity, the rejection of Roman or Greco-Roman civilization by the Roman and Greco-Roman world. Here, in the Roman Empire, you had an impressive creation—philosophy, literature, civi-

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lization, peace, all very relative, but all superior to the marginal mysteries of a few Jewish heretics—and this civilization cracks and crumbles before the assault of a gang of ill-mannered hippies. That poses a psychological problem as much as a historical one, and not irrelevant to late-nineteenth- century readers who saw themselves living in rather similar, and similarly uneasy, circumstances of shipwreck and abandonment of ancient certainties, a rising tide of *vagabondage et criminalité* lapping around their feet. And Renan encourages this sense of recognition by pointing out parallels. The Judean revolution of 66 A.D. is compared to the French Revolution of 1789 and to the Commune of 1871; a few years later, when Titus besieges Jerusalem, the Zealots who defend it house by house remind Renan of Communards. In St. Paul's day, the feuds between disciples of Jesus are compared to more recent ones between followers of Saint-Simon; a century later, Mithraism is compared to Freemasonry. Revolution and messianism ruin the Jews, as more briefly and more recently they had ruined the French; but they also represent a major contribution to the civilization that will rise out of them.

My point is not the aptness of Renan's parallels (although they are not bad!), but that they attracted attention, they brought distant doings close to home and, what was more important, they humanized and secularized hitherto sacred developments, turned revelation into invention, transcendence into history and sociology, original sin into fantasy—mischievious fantasy. Revealed truths had become matters of taste. "Le pêché . . . je le supprime—Sin, I abolish it. The dogma of original sin is the one that I care for least." And yet, you could not wipe out the vestiges of a Catholic education. Indeed, this was so difficult to do that, having torn down the churches built of stone, everyone set to building more churches made of plaster.

"Things," Berthelot reminds him, "always last much longer than one thinks." Renan needed no reminding. In 1847 already he had remarked that Christianity was dead, but "a new religion" threatened to take its place. Revolution was being venerated, sanctified, "moving towards religionification (excuse the barbarism)." Whoever dared take it in vain was dismissed as *insensé* (insane or, at least, foolish). "There will soon come a time when one will speak only of our *sainted revolution*."

We have known such a time, and perhaps it has passed. But a more enduring church lives on, that of the nation, which was probably the master idea of the nineteenth century. Renan had not thought much about nations until 1870, because he thought, like many of his contemporaries, about *races*—meaning ethnic or linguistic groups. But in 1871, at Bordeaux, the Alsatians who refused to accept annexation to the new German empire, who refused to shed their Frenchness to become Germans, proclaimed that national belonging and identity rest on consent, only on consent. Berthelot who had left cold, hungry, siege-bedraggled Paris, echoed their views: "A nation exists by the free consent of all its parties." Renan in 1871 still thought of France as "a vast company of shareholders"—gesellschaft, not gemeinschaft—but Berthelot's nudge made him think again. The result would be his great lecture of 1882, in which he raised the question "What is a Nation?" and defined national existence as "a daily plebiscite," rather like a marriage.

Continuing solidarity between consenting adults cannot rest on what he describes as ethnographic and archaeological politics. It cannot rest on race, which is a vain and fluxional notion; it cannot rest on language, which is a historical creation and which, like racial concepts, misleads, limits, and ghettoizes. Renan warns against such misapprehensions and against what he calls zoological conflicts, zoological wars. It is not just that references of this sort are scientific balderdash. Pragmatically speaking, too, "ethnographic politics are uncertain. You exploit them today against the others; then you see them turn against you."

Avoid such broken reeds. National solidarity, national gemeinschaft, stem from history: violence, interest, habit, common memories, and accepted oblivion for what does not quite fit. Because, again as in a good marriage, forgetfulness is as important as remembrance: "The essence of a nation is that all should have forgotten many things." Founding myths are not enough. To avoid destructive dissension, we have to let bygones be bygones: a kind of creative amnesia has to cement cohesion. "Historical oblivion, I would even say historical error, are essential factors in the formation of a nation." Which means that historical studies pressed too far can endanger "nationality." To put it in terms of today's circumstances: historical references that operate as conduits of unity and stable identity can

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easily become destabilizing agents when they challenge unity and deconstruct identity, when they whittle down "the social capital on which a nation rests."

The trouble with the results of historical revivalism, Renan goes on, is that "they bring to light the cruel, violent acts that lie at the origins of all political formations, even those whose consequences have been most beneficial. Unity is always achieved brutally." Terror, tyranny, persecutions, and massacres have made France, as they have made other modern nations. But commonality, then habit, acceptance, and identification have replaced violence; and it is better that way.

It is better, because a nation is a spirit, a common spirit, a spirit about things we have (or think we have) in common: "the common possession of a legacy of memories" that goes with "present consent and the wish to live together," and these are not the sort of thing that can be decreed or improvised. It can be taught at school and should be taught at school, but it is learned above all from life, and from the diffuse consensus about the past (our version of the past) on which the present rests.

So you could represent nationality, like race or churches or religion, as relative and conditioned—historically conditioned. That was what science did.

From his historical sociology, Renan had learned that science and knowledge are the province of an elite; and political science is a science like any other. Science is not democratic in the way it recruits those who do it or evaluates the result of their work. It follows that society should not be democratic either. Nor can it be, because "no society is possible if justice is pressed to its logical limits," and justice will never be complete until all are placed in identical conditions from birth. In any case, in democracies as we can see them, greatness seeps out, mediocrity takes over. The popular mind (and that includes the dominant classes of his day) has no context, no historical perspective; it ignores the higher values like honor, glory, let alone the arts and sciences. The original sin of every democratic institution is the sacrifice that it imposes on the superficial thinking of the crowd, leading to this conclusion: public instruction is the most important problem of our time.

When Renan presented these ideas in 1868, he was far from being the first to say so. What makes him original is the end by which he grasped the subject. Higher education, he says, is the source of elementary education. Public education stands on solid ground only if the educated public wants it, and it wants it right only if it has been educated to want the right things. "C'est l'université qui fait l'école." It was not the Prussian schoolmaster, the elementary teacher, who triumphed at Sadowa (where the Austrians were defeated in 1866), it was German science and German high culture. Countries, like the United States, which had created a considerable system of popular schooling without any serious higher education, would pay for this mistake by their intellectual mediocrity, the rudeness of their manners, the superficiality of their thinking, their general lack of intellectual standards. No one familiar with nineteenth-century American history will gainsay these impressions. No one familiar with twentieth-century America will contradict Renan's belief that it is hard to win over young people whom one has not inspired with a taste for serious things and solid studies.

But, of course, I am not talking about the United States. We are in 1868. The world—the scholarly world especially—ignores the four years of war that ended at Appomattox in 1865 and focuses on the four weeks of war in which Prussia defeated Austria in 1866. Renan, like his fellows, glances at America only to dismiss it. But when, like his fellows, he gazes at Germany, which he knows well, it is to rectify the range of public comment: if you want to imitate Prussia, he advises, do not copy its army; imitate its schools, its universities, its moral training, its science, the seriousness of its upper classes. War today is a matter of technology, science, and planning: "The most scientific nation, the one with the best machines, the best chemists, the least routine-bound officials, will be the best armed." But who can provide such essentials? Only the educated. Conclusion: "Before you send the people to school, go there yourselves! Enlightened classes, enlighten yourselves!"

Enlightened elites matter more than dimly lit masses; and the place to form elites is at the university. This brings Renan to make a number of suggestions that the French could have followed with profit. Begin by suppressing the barbarian notion of *one* university for the whole of France, one centrally ordered machine of higher education. Set up a number of distinct and rival universities and centers of higher education,

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each associated with a town, the way Tübingen and Oxford are—not too many, six or seven is about what the market will bear (and here, too, he was right for the 1870s). Encourage excellence. "Far better the absence of a university than the existence of a weak university—school of idleness and mediocrity." Encourage competition. France needs teaching bodies that represent different doctrines, approaches, points of view, and that compete with each other. Freedom of higher education does not mean the right of the first comer to perorate as he pleases. It means a framework broad enough and flexible enough to allow every serious idea a hearing. The important thing is for students to hear very diverse voices, to observe the clash of opinions, to learn not fixed doctrines (there are none) but the intellectual exercise, to get that athletic training of the mind which is the fruit of discussion. Informed discussion. Minds that have been spectators and participants in "the great battles of the human spirit" will carry their traces forever.

So, instruction for all, but only the few will reach the highest levels of knowledge, and "knowledge is power." Future power might well rest with chemists and physicists and with the powers of destruction, hence of terror, that they would control. But the true aristocracy that Renan postulates would not be specialists but intellectuals, free from narrow professional limits: a kind of scientific theocracy. Those of us who have watched intellectuals in their natural habitat may entertain reservations about Renan's vision, but his point was that truly cultivated minds resist the dogmatism and uniformity that he feared most. They resist because it is their nature to seek, to keep pressing further, to work their way ever closer to goodness, truth, and beauty.

Such a quest is never-ending because nature—past, present, and future—is inexhaustible. Renan's questing aristocrats were built on his own model, endlessly curious, endlessly searching. "It will take me five hundred years to exhaust my Semitic studies and, if my taste for them ever flagged, I would learn Chinese which would open a world that would keep me going indefinitely." Such curiosity goes with burning impatience for more. When Renan criticizes Amiel (fragments from whose journal were being published in the mid-1880s)—Henri Frédéric Amiel, the Genevese, with his delicate perceptions, his wounded sensibilities, his inaction, his impotence—what strikes him most forcibly is that Amiel is never in a hurry. His mind lingers—on experience, on himself. "That may be a quality. But it's the mark of a mind little possessed by curiosity, by a craving for things," by which he means discovery, knowledge, experience.

Amiel is too sensitive, too refined, too prudish: he distrusts the world, and he distrusts its fruits and its pleasures. But "life is only validated by its fruits," and these are gathered by those who are not afraid of being wrong, or even obsolete (indeed, the way to be right in the future is to know how to be unfashionable in the present), and "the most dangerous error in the domain of social morality is the systematic suppression of pleasure." Enjoyment, amusement, whether of the mind or of the senses, are good. Pleasure is good, smiling is good, even inconsistency is good—an excellent principle for someone who writes a great deal and knows that consistency is a weakness of little minds. "Giving way, according to the moment, to confidence, to scepticism, to optimism, to irony, is the way to be sure that one has sometimes been right."

When he wrote these words in his essay on Amiel, Renan was sixty years old. But he had given inklings of this bent ever since, in his twenties, he had admitted to Berthelot that he could scarcely express a [political] view without turning around a moment later to express the opposite side. Any position, any perspective one adopted was bound to be one-sided. Confidence in such one-sidedness went with the dogmatism and orthodoxy that he had dropped when he dropped religion. After 1845, he would be not a believer, but a critic, a skeptic, and tolerant even of the intolerant because, a he explained in 1847, tolerance is the daughter of critical skepticism. It was unbecoming to "modern men" to impose, or try to impose, as absolute those ideas whose essence it was to judge others and themselves as relative.

Wise men should beware the tendency to be exclusive and absolute. "Never imagine," he told David Strauss, his German predecessor in producing a secular life of Jesus, "that we may be so right that our opponents are completely wrong." The "modern" ideas that led him out of a church incapable of self-criticism, that made him warn against judgments too narrow to allow for their opposite, went with avoidance of bigotry, fanaticism, illiberality. Yet modern men went on practicing all these just like their forebears, perhaps because that is what comes naturally, but also because relativism had a serious drawback. If

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"what we think bad is sometimes useful and necessary," that could apply as well to the absolutism he loathed.

It is odd that *L'Avenir*, embodying the faith in rationality and progress that culminated in 1848, should do so well in 1890. But it is clear that, when Renan wrote it and, surely, even more when he let it go to print, he wondered whether faith in liberal progress was not a snare, whether prejudices might not be necessary delusions—at least for the masses, whether reason ("Quel spectacle qu'un homme qui ne vit que de la tête!") does not actually enlighten without warming, without conveying the excitement or the will to act. That was the weakness of the critical point of view. It prevented vigorous action. For action you had to be squarely dogmatic, believe your aim to be absolutely good. And action was as necessary as criticism, commitment as necessary as detachment. That was something his friend, Hippolyte Taine, never perceived. He could not understand the great things of the past "wrought more by enthusiasm and passion than by reason." Taine's Jacobins were horrid, as Jacobins had been, never heroic and grand, as they had been too. If you went by reason only, there would be no great enterprises, no adventures, no revolutions. "There are no prudent revolutionnaries."

Revolutions were loathsome, counterproductive, and uncomfortable, but no less interesting for that if one was a born observer. A life without revolutions, alarums, or excursions, such as could be found in efficient, well-run Jersey, felt very dull indeed; he had to deplore as unbearable "the boredom of this cold, regulated, monotonous life, without struggles or revolutions or social activities." Conservatives, on the other hand, would never learn. Conservatives were indispensable, yet self-destructive and depressingly stupid. But the resourceful spectator need not be at a loss. "The universe is a spectacle that a god offers himself." We may as well serve his intentions by making the show as brilliant and as varied as possible.

Early in life, Renan recognized himself as a tissue of contradictions and learned to enjoy the experience. Since two men lodged within him, one of them could always find reason to be satisfied. He was a dilettante then, skeptical, tolerant, as indulgent as he was self-indulgent, persuaded that "all that is popular is in bad taste," yet ready to admit that vulgar ideas and trivial tastes may do less harm than noble notions. "Que voulez-vous? C'est M. Homais qui a raison." Homais is right: without him "we should all be burnt alive." Materialism, banalization, are nevertheless better than the constraints that were once imposed in the name of transcendent verities. "The world moves towards a sort of Americanism, which hurts our refined ideas, but which . . . might be no worse than the Old Regime for the only thing that matters: the emancipation and the progress of the human mind." The revolution of 1848 and its aftermath had demonstrated that "the finest dreams proved deadly when transferred into the realm of facts, and that human affairs only started to do better when ideologues stopped meddling with them." You might deplore Americanism, but it went with freedom, because it went with indifference: "Perhaps one day general vulgarity will ensure the happiness of the elect."

That is Renan: profoundly respectful of the truth and of the search for truth, but playful, ironic, and skeptical—hence tolerant of himself as of others. He was fond of food, drink, gossip, and good talk with friends, and his acerbic wit was muted by good nature. He would welcome anything that is not commonplace. Only platitude is tinged with immorality. There is nothing bad in art except that which has neither style nor shape. Human fantasies may look like masquerades, but that is no reason to prohibit them. Hegel's philosophy was best taken as an infusion: "It is an excellent brew, but you must not chew the leaves."

There goes the dilettante again, appreciating the legitimacy, the fascination, of many contradictory points of view. What could be more appropriate to a late nineteenth century characterized (as Paul Bourget put it) by "the chaotic mixture of ideas, the conflict in all our minds of dreams" from a diversity of sources? Lots of young people in the 1880s and 1890s found Renan's recipes just what the doctor ordered: avoid dogmatic affirmation because it makes you say too much if you want to say anything at all, seek satisfaction in a multiplicity of cultural experience, an eclecticity of sensations, savoring as many as possible but gorging on none.

Amiel had criticized Renan for the "Epicureanism" of his imagination, by which I suppose he meant that, ultimately, Renan did things for fun, because he enjoyed them: instead of working for a higher end, he worked for the pleasure it gave him. This may be why Renan's history was less supposed to teach (though it was that too)

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than to seduce. "Ask of the past only the past itself"—the past for its own sake, because it is interesting in itself. There may be other profit, even certain lessons, to be drawn from the study of history, but these are circumstantial and uncertain. There are all sorts of claims that we would make for activities that we find fascinating that are more safely made in private.

But nuance and agnostic speculation were not going to hold out well. As a counter-Manichaean, Renan courted failure in the real world where even his admirers insisted on commitment. As a dispassionately (or discreetly) passionate thinker, he concealed the vigor of his essential views too well. A few years after Renan had died, his idea of intellocracy was rearticulated in the foundation, or assertion, of a *parti des intellectuels* that, from his point of view, could only be a contradiction in terms. What such a party meant could be appreciated when, on Sunday, September 13, 1903, another lapsed seminarian, Prime Minister Emile Combes, inaugurated a monument to Renan, designed and sited to flout and defy the old cathedral at Tréguier. Timed to coincide with High Mass and followed by a "grand democratic banquet" for two thousand feisty republicans, the ceremony showed how easily public figures, especially once dead, could be shanghaied to serve in alien causes. Renan had criticized "l'horrible manie de la certitude" and the intolerance associated with it. At Tréguier, one dogmatic certainty challenged another, and both came off the worse. As *Le Temps* wrote on the morrow: "It wasn't really worth the trouble of shaking off old dogmas in order to accept [the new dogma] of a parliamentary group"—the anticlerical Left.

As one would expect, the pretensions of secularist dogmatists called forth rival pretensions just as opinionated. So, now, bias, bigotry, sectarianism, and pontification could as readily be found among Renan's admirers as among his critics. Anticlerical doctrinaires fought clerical ones, meretricious dilettantes competed with pedantic ones. Skepticism and comprehension gave way, as they always do, to the affirmation of new and old absolutes, beliefs devoid of nuance, based on assertion, not on proof. And the old familiar *Journal des Débats*, Renan's favorite venue, could celebrate the fact that, with the twentieth century, agnosticism had given way to militancy.

But Renan had not been as agnostic as all that. It is recorded that he died "in the communion of humanity and of the Church of the future." Nor was he the thoroughgoing skeptic that the label would suggest. His skepticism consists not of denying but of confirming all, and his indifference had limits. He felt strongly about clericalism and about the need to struggle against it; he cared about France, which he would never abandon and for which he dreamed "pleine et certaine revanche"; he was never moderate about tolerance, or halfhearted about his pleasure as a thinking being. All may be vanity for Renan, but not vexation of spirit. All is vanity because we can never know all that we want to know, but look at all the fun we have getting to know what little we do know.

For Renan, aesthetic, intellectual pleasures were selfish but noble, and ennobling. For his conservative and neo-conservative critics, they were "delinquescent." Nietzsche had denounced "his broad priestly smirk" and enervating spirit. The anti-intellectual intellectuals of the fin de siècle denounced discredited intellocracy as mediocracy. Their heirs, going one better, announced that intellectuals were a dying species, if not already extinct. From Barthes and Baudrillard to Jean-Jacques Lyotard, euthanasia advanced by leaps and bounds. Before Francis Fukuyama pronounced the end of history, a spate of declarations had offered more eloquent obituaries of literature, history, authors, historians, and other species of clerk. No more "man," no more "human society," no more sociology or history, no more intellectuals. A whole new magazine (Gallimard's *Le Débat*) had to be founded in the early 1980s to suggest that these celebrations of mortality might be premature. Nothing fails like success.

Of course, the current disintegration of our system of reference, the new insistence on *de*structuring, *de*coding, *de*grading, *dis*ordering what had looked like evidence and reason, seems to confirm Renan's remark, which I quoted at the beginning of this essay, that "the characteristic of these studies, when they have attained their relative perfection, is to self-destruct." We begin by taking texts apart, and we end in self-fragmentation. Deconstruction, like a neutron bomb, eliminates the humans, leaves the structures. As Jacques Lacan observed with satisfaction before he himself self-destructed, "I have no more school, I have a heap." If language is presented as the ultimate disposable commodity, history is surely the penultimate: for some people, what Hayden White describes

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as the *dis*remembrance of things past. What better tribute to Renan's foresight?

Of course. Yet, just as certainly, Renan was quite wrong to intimate that history and our rummaging in it could be finite, as long as mankind hangs around; and he probably knew it. History continued to be made. History continued to make itself, as it had already been made in 1789 and 1793 and 1848 and 1871: dates that are shorthand for a history, for a making of history, for the bricks and the mortar and references and prejudices that make up history and that encourage people to make more history—and to remake history. It was just as Renan was reminded in 1871 that the history he had thought in 1848 had to be rethought, that after 1871 it was going to be a different sort of history than the kind that he had written even as late as 1870, that the definition of a nation, for example, and of national spirit had to be revised.

So Renan wrote revocable history; but who has ever written irrevocable history? And when he did not know, he guessed; and which one of us is so dull that we did not guess sometimes, let alone go out on a limb? Yet a hundred years after his death some still read some of his writings, some still take issue with the issues he raised; and that is as durable a version of immortality as any skeptic can look for.

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Alexander Zemlinsky

JOHN D. BARLOW

For years the name of Alexander Zemlinsky has been known to listeners of the music of Schönberg and Berg, especially to those who know the latter's *Lyric Suite*, which was dedicated to Zemlinsky and contains a musical quotation from Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony*, a fact usually noted on record jackets. Those acquainted with Schönberg's life know that Zemlinsky was the famous composer's teacher and brother-in-law. But except for musicians, musicologists, and other students of music, few have had much acquaintance with Zemlinsky's music until recently. Within the last ten years, however, his music has been performed more and more, and recordings have begun appearing.

Alexander Zemlinsky was a composer and conductor totally devoted to music—devoted to the point of self-effacement. His own ego seems to have meant less to him than an excellent performance or a solid creation of a piece of music. He was not much of a self-promoter. Like Schubert before him, he was generally careless about what became of his compositions after he wrote them. For example, his opera *Der Traumgörge* (Görge, the dreamer), composed during the years from 1903 to 1906, had attracted Gustav Mahler who had already introduced Zemlinsky's opera *Es war einmal* (Once upon a time) at the Hofoper in Vienna in 1900. Mahler was planning to perform Görge there in 1908. Before it came to its premiere, at the end of 1907, Mahler resigned his post as director of the Hofoper. Felix Weingartner, who replaced him, immediately began to cancel Mahler's plans and Görge was dropped. Zemlinsky was certainly disappointed, as his correspondence reveals, but he made no further attempt to have the opera performed and soon forgot about it. The score of Görge did not resurface until the 1970s, when it was found among archival material. Its world premiere took place in Nuremberg in October 1980.

Another example of Zemlinsky's indifference to his work is the fate of *Die Seejungfrau* (The mermaid), first performed with Zemlinsky conducting on January 25, 1905. On the same program, Schönberg conducted his own *Pelleas und Melisande*, which was the main sensation of the evening. Zemlinsky felt that his work was of such little consequence in comparison to Schönberg's that he canceled an already scheduled second performance of his piece. It was never published and the manuscript was lost. In Horst Weber's study of Zemlinsky, a major source of knowledge for this article, *Die Seejungfrau* is still listed as lost as late as 1977. A manuscript revision of the first movement was known to exist in Vienna, but scholars thought it was the beginning of a symphony. The rest of the piece turned up in the United States a few years later, and its second performance took place in Vienna in 1984, almost eighty years after the first.

Not only does Zemlinsky's personality fail to fit the image of the ego-driven artist, but his music at first hearing, at least to some listeners, does not seem to have the distinctive quality of the music of most other modern composers. His originality is not immediately evident, possibly because of his disdain for sensationalistic and dramatic effects. As a conductor of new music within the Schönberg school where he was always appreciated, respected, and admired, he may have felt no need to promote his abilities, taken for granted as they were among his peers. On the other hand, there seems to have been

JOHN D. BARLOW is Dean of the School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University at Indianapolis and author of *German Expressionist Film*.

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an aesthetics of modesty lurking in his approach to music, both as a conductor and a composer, a reluctance to impose his personality and a rejection of publicity and promotion apparently inherited from his reading of Karl Kraus and *Die Fackel*, Kraus's extraordinary one-man magazine, coupled with a faith in the power of music to let itself be heard. Grandiosity and megalomania were as foreign to him as modesty was to Richard Wagner. In personal appearance a modest and not especially attractive person, Zemlinsky, according to Elias Canetti, lacked "the inflated arrogance of the conductor that he still ultimately was." Yet he had a clear sense of what good music was, and he never doubted it.

Alexander Zemlinsky was born in Vienna on October 14, 1871, the son of Adolf and Clara von Zemlinsky. His father's family had come from what is now eastern Czechoslovakia, his mother from a Turkish enclave in Sarajevo that still belonged to the Ottoman Empire as late as 1878. It is not known where his father acquired the ennobling "von" prefix, but Zemlinsky, after using it off and on, discarded it after 1918. He had two younger sisters. The family was generally poor. Although the family was nominally Jewish, there is little evidence of much religious upbringing. In any case, Zemlinsky does not seem to have been particularly religious.

When he was thirteen years old, in 1884, Zemlinsky enrolled in the conservatory of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. He was an outstanding student, both in composition and as a performer, being designated in 1890 as the best pianist in the conservatory. He learned the Viennese classics and found himself in the midst of the battle between the music of Brahms and that of Wagner. Even though the opposition to Wagner was especially strong in Vienna, and Brahms was to play a role in the early recognition of Zemlinsky's own compositions, the young student was able to learn and profit from the music of both composers. Zemlinsky met Brahms in 1895. Brahms assisted him in having his Piano Trio published. In 1897, the year of Brahms's death, Zemlinsky's Symphony in B-flat, a piece influenced by both Brahms and Dvořák, won the Beethoven prize of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. In the same year, Zemlinsky's first opera, *Sarema*, much influenced by Wagner, was singled out for a prize in Munich.

As a teacher in the 1890s, Zemlinsky had two extraordinary pupils, both of whose enormous egos contrasted significantly with his: Arnold Schönberg and Alma Schindler, daughter of the Austrian landscape painter Emil Schindler and known eventually as Alma Mahler-Werfel. It is not known how much Schönberg learned from Zemlinsky. Schoenberg himself always spoke very highly of Zemlinsky and insisted that he owed him much. Certainly, their early music is similar, before Schönberg made the leap to atonality, a leap Zemlinsky never followed. Schönberg's first wife was one of Zemlinsky's sisters. They were close friends into the twenties. Something seems to have gone wrong, however, and they grew distant, albeit without losing any respect for each other's musical brilliance. It is easy to imagine that it would have been difficult to have maintained a friendship with Schönberg, whose sense of self-importance was unsurpassed. But back in the 1890s, the friendship of Zemlinsky and Schönberg was central to the beginning of musical modernism in Vienna.

Zemlinsky's other famous pupil, Alma Schindler, became the occasion for one of the first of Zemlinsky's silently suffered disappointments. No sooner did he discover himself deeply in love with her than she fell in love with Gustav Mahler, whom she eventually married. Zemlinsky, who admired Mahler's music and whose own mature compositions were to be influenced by Mahler more than by any other composer, endured his loss without any personal animosity, against either Mahler or Alma Schindler. As Horst Weber notes, he was "inclined to withdraw into himself and internalize his problems, a trait which would become stronger in his later life, rich as it was in disappointments."

Alma Mahler-Werfel wrote of Zemlinsky in her autobiography, *Mein Leben,* as the next man she fell in love with after she had suffered from "the first great love" of her life, Gustav Klimt. "It was almost obvious," she wrote, "that I would fall in love with Zemlinsky who was an ugly man. . . . He was a dreadful gnome. Small, chinless, toothless, always smelling like a coffee house, unwashed . . . and yet so intellectually keen and strong that he was uncannily fascinating." She wrote of him as a "born teacher" whose ability was unique. "That he did not become the great master of our time," she observes in trying to explain his lack of fame, "was probably because of his rickety constitution. From such a twig a tall tree cannot grow, no matter how precious the twig may be." Later, she refers to a conversation with Mahler in 1905, while

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watching Zemlinsky rehearsing the orchestra for the first performance of *Die Seejungfrau*:

> I then understood Zemlinsky's appearance for the first time: small, toothless, and without any appendage of a chin, giving his face a dwarf-like, frightened expression. And Mahler and I always said, "Zemlinsky lacks his chin in his music, too!" . . . It's too bad! His ability overruns his imagination.

Although her judgment of his music is too harsh, her observation about his appearance seem to correspond with the observations of others. Contemporary caricatures usually emphasize this "chinlessness." And Elias Canetti writes that he could never look at Zemlinsky "without looking for his chin."

Zemlinsky seems to have been greatly concerned about his homeliness, at least to the extent that he represented it in various guises in his music. The most obvious case is the opera *Der Zwerg* (The dwarf), an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's story "The Birthday of the Infanta" about a dwarf brought to the Spanish court as an object of amusement, who, unaware of his physical deformity, falls in love with the infanta and believes in the possibility of her reciprocating his passion. Only when he sees himself in the mirror does he realize his self-deception. After a desperate appeal to the infanta, who is now bored with it all, he dies in despair. This tale of a physical outcast had already been made into a ballet by Zemlinsky's contemporary Franz Schreker. Furthermore, Schreker was persuaded by Zemlinsky to compose one of his best operas, *Die Gezeichneten* (*Those Marked by Fate*), concerning an unattractive man in a world of sexual conquest and glitter.

Attractiveness is also an important part of the other opera Zemlinsky adapted from Oscar Wilde, *Eine florentinische Tragödie* (*A Florentine Tragedy*), based on the fragment of a verse play about a Florentine businessman who discovers his wife in compromising circumstances in the company of a handsome young prince of the city. After mounting tensions, the two men duel and, surprisingly, the businessman kills the young lover. At this point, husband and wife look at each other and are surprised to realize how strong and how beautiful, respectively, each is to the other. But the theme of physical unattractiveness is also present in less obvious ways in other of the composer's operas. In *Kleider machen Leute* (Clothes make the man), appearance, as the title implies, is an essential feature. In *Der Traumgörge*, Görge does not fit in, he is clumsy, possibly crude. His comportment, an aspect of appearance, defines him as an outsider. Physical appearance plays an important role in Zemlinsky's first two operas, *Sarema* and *Es war einmal*, and, especially in his last and incomplete opera, based on André Gide's version of the Gyges episode in Herodotus, *König Kandaules* (King Candaules).

Zemlinsky's first period of creative activity reached its apogee in 1910 in the first performances of *Kleider machen Leute*, *The 23rd Psalm* (a choral setting), and four of his *Maeterlinck Songs*. In 1911 he went to Prague as director of the Prague German Theater where he became an outstanding conductor. Zemlinsky's reputation as a conductor is almost legendary. Stravinsky, for example, who credits a performance of *The Marriage of Figaro* in Prague under Zemlinsky with having convinced him for the first time of Mozart's greatness, considered Zemlinsky the greatest all-around conductor he had ever known. Not only was this Prague period characterized by extensive conducting, but, lasting until 1927, when he was called to Berlin to be Kapellmeister at the Kroll Opera, it was the period in which he composed some of his greatest pieces: the *Second String Quartet* (1914); the complete *Maeterlinck Songs* (1913), including the orchestral version of 1924; the second version of *Kleider machen Leute* (1922); and the *Lyric Symphony* (1922).

Zemlinsky's Berlin period ended abruptly in 1933 with the coming of the Nazis. Here he composed his opera *Der Kreidekreis* (The chalk circle), first performed in Zurich on October 14, 1933. He returned to Vienna, but failed to re-establish himself, although a number of compositions from this period, especially his *Sinfonietta*, his *Fourth String Quartet*, and a number of songs, are important. His last opera, *König Kandaules*, was either never finished or partly lost. An incomplete manuscript of this opera exists in the Library of Congress with a date of 1935. In 1938, when the Nazis came to Vienna, he emigrated by way of Prague to New York. Already suffering from heart disease, Zemlinsky died in Larchmont, New York, in 1942, after failing to adjust to the United States, where he was unable to accomplish any work or composition. A photograph of Zemlinsky in Prague on his way to New York shows a sadly broken man.

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Zemlinsky was not prolific. Only twenty-seven of his compositions have opus numbers. About sixty more compositions and songs are known, although a few of these have been lost. Like Alban Berg, he worked carefully on each piece. And like many Viennese intellectuals of the early twentieth century, Zemlinsky was strongly influenced by Karl Kraus, whose care for choosing the right word and opposition to ornamentation in literature and writing, learned from the architect Adolf Loos and his principles of non-ornamental architecture, became a central tenet of modernist aesthetics in Vienna. If there was not an intimate, necessary connection between the way something was written and the aim of the particular piece of writing, it was deemed barbaric. Figures of speech, rhetorical flourishes, the sound of words, dazzling effects: Kraus itemized them all in his journal, *Die Fackel*, and denounced their users when the reason for their use was primarily for effect.

Schönberg and his circle, including Zemlinsky, had all developed the aesthetic values of their music in the spirit of Kraus. But where Schönberg defined traditional harmony and the avoidance of dissonance, even, eventually, music that was melodic, attractive, and pleasant to listen to, as ornamental, thus leading him to a music whose integrity lay more in its logic than in the way it sounded, Zemlinsky attempted to avoid ornamentation without abandoning traditional harmony and the pleasing sound of music. He was careful to have every cadence and musical idea function as an essential part of each composition. He eschewed transitional passages that were not part of a piece's basic structure. There are few passages in his music designed to fill in gaps, or whose purpose is primarily to move the listener from one place to another.

As was the case with Mahler, some of his music, especially his program music, sounds like movie music. In *Die Seejungfrau*, for example, there is nothing that does not play a specific role in the narrative, telling the story and accompanying the action imagined to be taking place just as it would in a film narrative. This resistance to ornament may also explain why Zemlinsky's mature compositions in sonata form—the last three quartets, the *Lyric Symphony*, and the *Sinfonietta*—are few: music simply for the sake of music may have seemed, after Wagner and in spite of Brahms, to function as an ornament. The *Second Quartet* and the *Lyric Symphony* are both essentially programmatic, even if not so in a narrative sense.

Zemlinsky thought of himself primarily as an opera composer. Eight operas are ascribed to him, if one includes the unfinished *König Kandaules*. The other seven had variously strange and frustrating histories. It is another aspect of Zemlinsky's poor promotion of himself as a composer that he generally failed to work with good librettists. Even those operas considered to be his best, *Kleider machen Leute* and *Der Kreidekreis*, both based on good texts, suffer in comparison with many other less admirable operas, the former because of the provincially nineteenth-century Swiss story by Gottfried Keller on which it is based. It is a good story, and, as Theodor Adorno has noted, Zemlinsky's opera could be one of the best twentieth-century comic operas; but it is not of a kind likely to appeal to those outside the German-speaking world. *Der Kreidekreis* may suffer from an outmoded use of the old chalk-circle story of two women claiming to be a child's real mother, as well as the Chinese fairy tale comprising the plot and inviting comparison with Puccini.

The libretti of *Sarema*, *Ès war einmal*, and *Der Traumgörge* are all so mired in the simplistic world of the fairy tale that even the best music, as in *Der Traumgörge*, is trivialized by the words. The repeated statement, "Lebendig müssen die Märchen werden" ("Fairy tales must come to life"), sententious and formulaic, becomes unintentionally pompous even though it is supposed to indicate the hero's simplicity and guilelessness. The libretto violates the integrity of the music and Zemlinsky's own Krausian standards with its ornamental language—unfortunately, because there are musical passages in this opera that are among the best of Zemlinsky's early period.

Nearly all of Zemlinsky's operas deal with alienated individuals in one sense or another. Even his tone poem, *Die Seejungfrau*, is about the mermaid's alienation from her elements; the *Lyric Symphony* is about the alienation of lovers from each other; and the *Maeterlinck Songs*, with their obsession with death, are about alienation from the living. Much of this alienation was very much a part of the fin de siècle mood with which Zemlinsky identified. But Zemlinsky's music gives to his alienated subjects a particular characteristic, a kind of split and contradictory position that, as Horst Weber notes, resists

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the romanticization of their alienation and leaves it unresolved.

There is no consolation or reward, neither romantic inwardness nor expressionistic revolt, for this alienation in Zemlinsky. The most positive moment of the dwarf's life, when he believes himself to be a handsome knight loved by a beautiful princess, is a moment in which, obvious to all around him, he is anything but what he thinks he is. The Hofmeister's words, "a cruel jest of nature," apply ironically to the opera, nature's opposite: a cruel jest of art.

Two of Zemlinsky's last songs—one a rendering of Goethe's second "Wandrers Nachtlied," the other a setting of a poem by a totally unknown poet, August Eigner—are good examples of Zemlinsky's aesthetic. In the Eigner Lied, "Und einmal gehst du . . . ," the lyric subject moves through an autumn landscape. There is no striking melody, only variations on an uneventful subject and the piano's accompaniment conveying the falling leaves of the season, and quietly and darkly the Lied ends with lines about how each person must go alone into his own autumn. Zemlinsky's Goethe Lied contrasts revealingly with Schubert's magnificent setting of the same poem. None of the pious confidence is here in Zemlinsky's piece, none of the romantic consolation for pain and suffering. In the last line, Zemlinsky's Lied longs for peace, but the sparest of melodies seems to deny the possibility of peace and to turn the expostulation, "Süsser Friede, komm, ach komm in meine Brust!" into a denial of the possibility of peace and music of consolation. This is a music aware of its limits, at the same time lamenting the reality of these limits in a world without much else to offer. Zemlinsky composed the Lied around the time of his forced exile from Europe.

Zemlinsky's best-known collection of Lieder is the six *Maeterlinck Songs*, composed originally with piano accompaniment between 1910 and 1913. An orchestral version, a little longer, was composed between about 1913 and 1923. These dark and gloomy songs of death, settings of German translations of six poems from Maurice Maeterlinck's collection "Quinze Chansons," rearranged in their sequence to provide a kind of spiritual development, are characterized by their rich tonality and expressiveness. In fact, though the text is typical of fin de siècle decadence, the music clearly belongs to the expressionism that in 1913 was in its ascendancy. Particularly in the orchestral version, the listener senses an obsessive consciousness becoming an abyss without hope of salvation in romantic revelation or release in the ecstasy of new forms, only a deeper and deeper sinking into the depths of a psyche resigned to its descent into darkness.

For one who composed relatively little, Zemlinsky left behind many different kinds of pieces of music. Not only operas and Lieder, as one might expect from a person who thought of himself as an opera-composer, but symphonies, chamber music (a trio, a quintet, quartets), ballet, piano music, orchestral music, program music, and choral works. Among the latter are settings of three psalms, one of which, the thirteenth, composed in 1935 but never performed until 1971, is a mighty piece, worthy of Anton Bruckner and at the opposite pole of the brooding melancholy of the Maeterlinck songs. This psalm, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?" imploring succor in time of travail and helplessness before one's enemies, begins with heavy, trembling bass chords that the modern listener cannot help but link to conditions in Europe in the 1930s when Zemlinsky was composing it. But the music carries through to a powerful, even if desperate, statement of defiance and faith in the face of affliction.

Along with the *Maeterlinck Songs*, Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony* is fairly well known. A symphonic song cycle of German translations of poems by Rabindranath Tagore, it is modeled on Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* both in its genre and in its oriental subject matter. In composing a unified and tightly woven piece, Zemlinsky rearranged the poems, chosen from Tagore's cycle *The Gardener*, to form a sequence dealing with the relationship between art and life. In a statement published in a periodical for conductors in 1924—the only statement the composer ever published about any of his music—Zemlinsky pointed out that the poems had been carefully chosen and "through arranging them and setting them to music brought into an inner unity" that it was the conductor's responsibility to emphasize in performance.

There are no pauses between the movements in the *Lyric Symphony*, which flow together, integrated as Zemlinsky intended. The integration of the piece is one of its remarkable aspects, especially when the opening melody returns, softly in the background, at the point where the woman calls for the end of dialogue, thus

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indicating that the relationship between the two voices is coming full circle. But its greatest achievement is its recognition, inscribed in the performance, of the celebratory nature of music and its actual function in immobilizing, even momentarily, the transitory nature of experience and transmuting it into something that can be held on to, in memory, in energy, without specific definition.

In 1935 Zemlinsky composed his *Sinfonietta*. This short symphonic piece is modest in intention as well as in claims for itself. Its three movements coming to just a little more than twenty minutes, it is a tour-de-force that precisely recapitulates Zemlinsky's capabilities. Adorno singles out Zemlinsky's "awe of emphasis and lingering," a characteristic of his music that stands out here. Not a note is wasted, not a moment overdone in this wonderful little piece, composed with vitality and energy. A falling melody occurring in the lively first movement is taken up in the brooding second movement, which has the retrospective character of a funeral march. It also includes a reference to the last of the *Maeterlinck Songs*, thus emphasizing the funereal quality of the movement. The last movement, a rondo with reminiscences of the first two movements, emphasizes the retrospective character of the entire piece, and brings it briskly to a close without self-indulgence and lament.

It is not clear how many string quartets Zemlinsky may have written. Four have been published, the manuscript of an early, student work in E-minor is in the Library of Congress, a piano quartet in D is known to have been performed in Vienna in 1893. The first published quartet, in A, Op. 4, originally performed in Vienna in 1896 and published in Berlin in 1898, betrays once again strong echoes of Brahms and Dvořák. The *Second String Quartet*, Op. 15 and without key signature, was composed in 1914 and is one of Zemlinsky's most outstanding and original creations. It is an application of Mahler's rambling symphonic form to a piece of chamber music. Its wealth of musical ideas, subtly interwoven and developed, participate in an ambitious attempt to develop the story of a musical personality threatened by conformism, trends, duty, and other social and collegial commitments. The music, at times agitated, seems to struggle with asserting itself, reluctant at first and eventually refusing totally to abandon its tradition while nonetheless remaining original and distinctive.

In listening to the *Second String Quartet*, it is difficult not to get lost. There is no pause between movements, and the rambling, melancholy nature of each often deprives its parts of a distinctive character. At first hearing, the different melodies seem to blend together, rarely exhibiting clear individual distinctions. But it is precisely this subtle series of transformations that is the distinctive sign of Zemlinsky's originality.

Weber notes that the *Second String Quartet*, more than anything else composed by Zemlinsky, demonstrates how close his music is to that of Alban Berg. Particularly the development of the adagio in the second movement reminds the listener of the adagio of Berg's *Lyric Suite*, the movement with the quotation from Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony*. The entire quartet, with its flexible interchanges, avoidance of melodic distinctiveness, and its reluctance to make a clear statement, combined with its individualism and refusal to sound like a traditional string quartet, is, like many of Berg's compositions, the music of a personal identity that recognizes the fragility, even the improbability, of expressing itself in public.

The *Third String Quartet*, from 1924, was especially admired by Adorno, who singled out the "compositional civil courage with which Zemlinsky interrupts trends and developments and never pursues rhythmic impulses further than to where they tend by themselves." For Adorno, it represents the opposite of all doctrinal and formulaic systems of development. Leaving developmental impulses behind, then bringing them back to life is, for Adorno, peculiar to Zemlinsky, and particularly striking in this quartet's theme-and-variation movement.

The *Fourth String Quartet*, composed in 1935 and the last major work composed by Zemlinsky, was not published until the 1970s. Rather than going on beyond the earlier quartets, it looks back, nostalgically recapitulating what they have done, even including a nostalgic reference in the first movement to Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. It includes a wild, scherzo-like movement, another theme and variations, this time in the form of a barcarole and including a plaintive cello solo, and a double fugue. As a reflective looking back on what must have been in 1936 a disappointing life in a dark and unpromising time,

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this quartet is remarkable in how free it is of self-pity, how robust the nostalgia and melancholy in it are, and how energetically its final double fugue propels the music to its end—as always, without embellishment and ornamentation.

Zemlinsky's individuality as a composer was recognized early in the twentieth century in Vienna, where other composers and music critics acknowledged his accomplishments. Over time, and in the confusions and disarray of war, as well as the deliberate neglect during the Nazi period, the lack of overt formal innovation in his music caused his work to be ignored. Zemlinsky himself, as Andrew Huth has observed, a champion of new and avant-garde music in his conducting, was fairly conservative in his own compositions and faithful to tonality. This split in his own personality tended to create indifference to his music among those who knew him as a conductor of new music, relegating the conductor's own work to a supplementary status as the musical exercises of one who, while obviously very knowledgeable about music, did not in his own music participate in the important musical developments of the day.

Even though Zemlinsky's music is tonal, much of it clearly does participate in the spirit of the new music in the first half of the twentieth century. It is original and characteristic in its tonal textures, in its own way of hiding melody under rich textures, of seeming frequently to verge on the edge of tonality without going over. Zemlinsky's melodies are subtle, sometimes so scarcely noticeable that it is only in their development or through continued listening that their individuality emerges. In the conflict between melodic development and other voices, especially in Zemlinsky's quartets, melody seems to lose, the other voices seem to drown it out, to keep it from asserting itself. Yet it is precisely this development, almost insidiously, in defiance of its subtlety, worming its way in, that is the glory of this music.

Zemlinsky was well aware of his situation—not only his lack of fame as a composer but his own apparent indifference to it. He wrote in 1930 to Alma Mahler-Werfel about how he lacked "the certain something that you have to have" to be a success. "In a crowd like this, it's no use having elbows, you also have to know how to use them." Zemlinsky never used his elbows. If anyone ever realized Karl Kraus's ideal of the creative artist in a world drowning in publicity, self-promotion, and media hype, it was Alexander Zemlinsky, eschewing in his music ornamental effects and flashiness and devoted to the art he loved, both as a creator and a practitioner.

In suggesting that in Zemlinsky's music there is a voice of recall or withdrawal from promotional impulses, whether in promotion of one's own interests or those that are corporate or ideological, Horst Weber defines Zemlinsky as a composer for a time turning away from the ideology of growth and expansion, of totality, of making statements that are expected to shock or overwhelm: a music that is not the bold assertion of an individual, whether classical, romantic, or rock; a non-utopian music for an age with a surfeit of utopian art and position-taking and statement-making. The melancholy tone in his music is not one of despair, or cosmic anguish, as in Mahler; it does not assert that the true nature of human life is hopeless suffering. Instead, Zemlinsky's is the music of melancholy recognition that things do not always work out, that death is sad, that there are tragic elements in human life that no amount of social planning, entrepreneurial invention, or political dreaming can ever overcome, the kind of elegiac awareness so characteristic of Schubert's great B-flat sonata and Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale."

The German poet Gottfried Benn once said that if a writer succeeded in creating just five or six great poems in his lifetime, such an achievement would be sufficient for all the struggle and hard work that a writer's life might involve. Five or six consummate pieces of music would amount to the same thing. Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony*, his *Maeterlinck Songs*, his string quartets, his *Sinfonietta*, and one or two of his operas are such accomplishments. That his time of recognition has finally started coming, even if only modestly, is a pleasure to realize.

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The Boy Scouts Under Siege

ALLEN SALZMAN

What do 65 percent of college graduates, 72 percent of Rhodes scholars, 75 percent of military academy graduates, 65 percent of U.S. congressmen, 85 percent of airline pilots, 85 percent of FBI agents, 11 of the 12 astronauts who walked on the moon, and 108 of all 172 astronauts have in common? They were all Boy Scouts. In 1990 there were 402 local councils that claimed a total membership of 4,292,992 youth (up 40 percent since 1979) and 1,155,077 adult members.

The virtuous image of the Boy Scouts has traditionally been exploited by celebrities. In films, for instance, it has been invoked from the Marx Brothers to Steven Spielberg and Bruce Willis. Michael Jackson, the rock star, who was never a Boy Scout, instituted the "Michael Jackson Good Scout Humanitarian Award" in 1991 for the Los Angeles Area Boy Scout Council.

Lord Robert Baden-Powell, lieutenant general in the British army and hero of the siege of Mafeking (1899–1900) during the Boer War, founded the Boy Scouts in 1908, and they were imported into the United States in 1910. Since that time they consistently have attempted to live up to an ideal image in which they do good deeds—scouts save about one hundred lives per year—tie knots, tent in the woods, explore, and learn about compasses and nature, for which they earn merit badges. They were given a charter by the U.S. Congress in 1916 and report on their activities to a joint committee of the Congress each year.

The Boy Scouts receive no public money, although they sometimes enjoy free rooms in public schools for meetings and ceremonies. Separate public schools sponsor the largest number, 1.1 million scouts, which some consider an indirect form of public support. The 402 local Boy Scout councils administer the program and are funded locally. They receive money through registration fees, donations from private individuals, special fund drives, and from a variety of other sources. Local civic organizations, such as chapters of the American Legion and the Lions Club, donate money and facilities. Something like one-quarter of their income is said to come from United Way campaigns. Revenue sources include a healthy publishing company and a mail-order supply operation that netted $2 million and $12 million respectively in fiscal 1990. The program owns land, buildings, and equipment valued at over $44 million.

The Mormon Church is the biggest single Scout sponsor. It formed the first U.S. Council in 1913. Catholic churches are the fourth largest Scout sponsor. Together, Mormons and Catholics support more than one-fourth of all Boy Scout activities in America. Combining the sponsorship of non-Mormon Protestant denominations adds another 725,243 scouts to the total. Religious organizations sponsor more than half of just the Cub Scout packs, for younger boys, in the United States. There is no official religious affiliation, although scouts often meet in basements of sponsoring churches; the Boy Scout oath and law, which is taken seriously, affirms a belief in God.

The highest percentage—21 percent—of boys who meet eligibility requirements, are located in the far western United States, as compared to 15 to 20 percent in the other major regions of the country. This is probably owing to the influence and involvement of the Mormon church.

✪ ALLEN SALZMAN teaches in the humanities and social sciences departments at Triton Community College in River Grove, Illinois.

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Baden-Powell's movement caught on like wildfire throughout the developed world in the early decades of this century. Today, with the support of the World Scout Organization, scouting is having a resurgence similar to the early days of the movement, with new troops founded in former eastern bloc countries, which had outlawed scouting in the late 1940s.

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Education is important to the Boy Scouts. In the 1980s the national organization began an aggressive attack on what it identified as the "five unacceptables"—hunger, child abuse, drug abuse, illiteracy, and youth unemployment. The organization stresses educational achievement in each program of the project, besides food drives and the like. *Boy's Life*, the magazine of the Boy Scouts, has joined with the Bank Street College of Education, and now publishes installments of great literary masterpieces in comic-book form alongside familiar articles on trail lore.

The Boy Scout Handbook, now in its tenth edition, expanded and largely rewritten, encourages reading and academic achievement and attempts to educate boys in many areas. For example, the section on biology discusses the oxygen-carbon cycle, photosynthesis, the water cycle, and North American animals. There are sections on meteorology, geography, and astronomy. To reflect the concerns of a new generation of scouts, along with instruction on the latest techniques of wilderness ecology, which has earned the *Handbook* praise from the U.S. Forest Service, there is also a section on "sexual responsibility," which warns about AIDS, and a twenty-four-page pull-out section for parents, "How to Protect Your Children From Child Abuse and Drug Abuse." Lest admirers of earlier editions of the *Handbook*, such as Paul Fussell, worry that its non-literary blend of practical homiletics and homey good sense has been deconstructed, there are still the old sections on knot tying, first aid, and good citizenship.

Education has always been the cornerstone of scouting. For instance, the scout motto Be Prepared has traditionally been explained in the *Handbook* as follows: "A Scout prepares for whatever comes his way by learning all he can." But leaders try to stress education as a general theme in most scouting activities these days. The Spring Camporee held in May 1990 by the Green River District, Chief Seattle Council, for example, set up their tents in a field adjoining the Boeing Aerospace and Electronics Center. They toured the center and learned something about space technology. For another example, there are fifty computer bulletin boards that form an informal intercouncil communications network throughout the world. One can download articles on a variety of subjects through the bulletin boards, including history, geography, and computers. As yet another example, on one rainy Sunday morning in March 1992, I observed several dozen soggy but enthusiastic Cub Scouts who participated in a rather complicated demonstration of American Indian techniques in which they drilled and tapped into maple trees and boiled the sap into syrup. And for one last example, the town of Hoffman Estates, Illinois, sponsors a troop of Police Explorers, which consists of young persons who are considering careers in law and law enforcement. They serve as volunteers with the local police department and are given what amounts to introductory apprenticeship training. Around the country, other Career Awareness Explorer posts offer young people chances to consider careers in medicine and computers.

The consecutive stages of the Boy Scouts are established in reference to the grades in the educational system. Boys begin Tiger Scouts, a pre–Cub Scout program only recently added, in the first grade. Cub Scouts are in the second through the fifth grades; they join the Boy Scouts in the Sixth grade and may remain in the troop until the end of high school (grade twelve); or, they may choose in the ninth grade or thereafter to join the Explorers, which runs from grade nine through the age of twenty-one, which is approximately the end of four years of college.

While the organization often works through the public schools, scouting's purpose is primarily recreational, not educational. As one scout executive told me, "We sell it to the boys as fun. If we sold it as more school, nobody would come." Yet by showing the compatibility of what is academic with what is fun and practical in its activities, the organization indirectly upholds formal education. At the same time, scouting offers an informal educational agenda that the schools cannot offer. Two sociologists who studied this matter, Judith Kleinfeld and Anne Shinkwin, noted in *Making Good Boys Better* the following:

> Parents, and particularly middle-class parents, are anxious to see their children acquire the skills that they recognize

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are essential for success in American society—how to influence other people, how to work within organizational structures and roles, how to organize one's self and others to achieve goals, and so on.

These skills, gained through scouting activities such as camp-outs, troop meetings, and scout service projects, allow boys to affirm threatened family values, such as loyalty to one's primary group, community, and nation, because families—increasingly nowadays families with one parent—are involved.

But a deeper education underlies the informal education in social skills learned in scouting, and one can still see it quietly unfold in scout troops throughout the nation. The Boy Scouts are responsible for forming in the boys so-called habits of the heart, a phrase recently borrowed from Tocqueville by Robert Bellah for his book of that title. Some "habits," such as devotion to religious tradition, to family life, and to the local community, form the uniquely American character, and with it the kind of citizen who feels he has a voice in the larger political debate of the nation. Indeed, Tocqueville saw that free institutions can be upheld by just such an individual, who feels no significant aspect of the relationship between the local and the wider community should bar his participation in both. The Boy Scouts' emphasis on religion provides obvious moral coherence and legitimacy to this deeper education. By locating these "habits" in the domain of the ultimate and sacred, what are really heavy new responsibilities may feel less burdensome to the child as he learns them. One day he may be more inclined to shoulder them willingly because he will perceive that they flow naturally from the immortal core of life.

III

The Boy Scouts have long had their detractors. For instance, from the time of Baden-Powell, scouts have been accused of militaristic jingoism. The image is hard to shake. Boy Scouts are organized into units called patrols and troops; they wear uniforms, march, and salute. One recent biographer of Baden-Powell cites a hitherto unknown letter that he claims proves the explicit militaristic intentions that lay behind the founding of the organization. On a related issue, the same author censures Baden-Powell for not putting enough distance between the English scouts and the fascists. The theory that explicit connections existed between the Boy Scouts and the Balilla, Avanguardisti, the Hitlerjugend is old and by now wearing pretty thin, but it still finds its way into the debate.

It has been argued with greater justification that Boy Scouts have been especially vulnerable throughout their history to predation by pedophiles who become adult leaders. In 1988 the organization disclosed that it had recorded more than two hundred cases of sexual misconduct. The new handbook has a section that helps the individual scout to combat the problem using the "3 Rs": "Recognize, Resist and Report." One Boy Scout official told me that, since the late 1980s, the organization's unstated policy requires that if there is a report of abuse by a leader, the organization considers the individual guilty until proven innocent.

Still, the perception may never go away. For one thing, scouting pedophilia has become a literary commonplace, as Paul Fussell, in *The Boy Scout Handbook*, acknowledges:

> Then there are the leers and giggles triggered by the very word 'scoutmaster,' which in knowing circles is alone sufficient to promise comic pederastic narrative. '*All* scoutmasters are homosexuals,' asserted George Orwell, who also insisted that '*All* tobacconists are Fascists.'

And who can forget the portrait of the lubricious Greff, the scoutmaster in *The Tin Drum* by Günter Grass.

> I would have been glad to gaze out at the meadow where, as I knew, scouts under the leadership of Greff the greengrocer were pitching tents, playing lansquenet, and, as befitted boy scouts, doing good deeds. Not that I was interested in their fulsome glorification of camp life. What appealed to me was the sight of Greff in his short pants. Such was his love of slender, wide-eyed, pale boys that he had donned the uniform of Baden-Powell, the father of the boy scouts.

In the novel, Greff hangs himself in a Boy Scout–style ceremony after receiving a summons to appear on a morals charge. (Incidentally, Günter Grass does *not* confuse the Pfadfinderbewegung with Hitlerjugend; he despises both equally.) Grass's allusion to Baden-Powell in this context is also part of the tradition: since the late 1970s three separate biographies (Piers Brendon's *Eminent Edwardians*, 1980; Michael Rosenthal's *The*

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Character Factory, 1986; and Tim Jeal's *The Boy-Man*, 1990) have either declared or implied, although they offer no conclusive proof, that Robert Baden-Powell was a homosexual, and that the founding of the Boy Scout movement must be understood as sublimation of sex and pedophilia.

One wonders why the three biographies were needed. Two of them are quite long. They reveal little that is very interesting about the kind of man Baden-Powell was. His inner life appears not to have been very impressive. In my opinion, given the distorted predispositions of some successful modern biographers to search for sexual flaws, there is little to choose from between the three recent biographies of Baden-Powell and an earlier one (*Baden-Powell: The Two Lives of a Hero*, 1964, by William Hillcourt and Lady Baden-Powell) that unabashedly venerated him.

IV

The recent problems of the Boy Scouts of America derive from their attempt to stand—in a way that is consistent with their history—for a set of time-honored values that they actually claim to believe in and that they are reluctant to change. They feel these values are enshrined in the Boy Scout oath:

> On my honor I promise I will do my best: to do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the scout law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

The Boy Scouts refuses to permit atheists, homosexuals, and girls to become members based on their interpretation of the oath, and they feel legally entitled to exclude them because they are a private organization.

In the belief, in Tennyson's phrase, that the old order changeth, yielding place to the new, some now argue that the Boy Scouts have lost their claim to be entirely private for a number of reasons, and they feel that their exclusions violate the civil liberties of the individuals in question. More broadly, they find that the Boy Scouts historically have been guilty of perpetuating what they would term America's "theocentric, patriarchal/sexist, and homophobic culture," and that now is the time for this to be redressed.

In the case of *Curran v. Mount Diablo* (California) *Council of the Boy Scouts of America*, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Tim Curran sued the Boy Scouts in 1981 for rejecting Curran after learning that the Eagle Scout and assistant scoutmaster was a homosexual. The ACLU and Curran lost; the case is currently being appealed before the California Supreme Court. In *Randall v. Orange County* (California) *Council of the Boy Scouts of America*, the ACLU and two nine-year-old twins are suing the Scouts because their membership application was rejected when they refused to say they believed in God. The Superior Court judge in the case agreed with the plaintiffs that their civil rights had been violated and ordered them readmitted into the Cub Scouts. In a similar case in Illinois, Elliot Welsh sued the Boy Scouts for violating the 1964 Civil Rights Act; he found himself unable to enroll his son Mark in the organization because of the Declaration of Religious Principle in the membership application, which reads:

> The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God and therefore recognizes the religious element in the training of the member. . . .

Welsh wanted the Declaration and oath changed to take the word *God* out. The suit was denied on March 13, 1992, but it is expected that on appeal it will make its way eventually to the Supreme Court of the United States.

In Miami, a judge refused in June of 1991 to order a regional scout council to allow an eight-year-old girl, Margo Mankes, to attend a summer scout camp that started the next day. The judge said the issue of whether girls should be admitted should be decided at a trial and not in an emergency hearing. The girl was kept on in her home troop after the regional council expelled her. That case has not yet gone to court. The ACLU is currently considering taking on a similar case in California being brought by a group of girls who want to join a local troop.

On May 21, 1992, Mr. Keith Richardson, a homosexual, filed a complaint with Chicago's commission on human relations. He has not applied for a position with the Boy Scouts but claims that if he does he will be rejected because they discriminate against homosexuals.

As the cases begin to move through the legal system, strong voices are audible on both sides. In an article for the *National Review* in June 1991, Midge Decter directed her sarcasm at the

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ACLU: "Naturally, it [the ACLU] would not stand idly by with so rich a target as the Boy Scouts of America." The ACLU attorney who lost the Curran trial complained, "If the Boy Scouts claimed to espouse anti-Semitism, would that excuse exclusion of all Jewish scoutmasters?" Lawyers for the Boy Scouts claim in each of these cases that to admit the excluded groups would alter the fundamental character of the organization and change its nature for the boys who go through it. Lawyers for the parties bringing these suits contend that this is exactly what they seek; they deem it ought to be changed.

You do not have to be a lawyer or a legal scholar—and I am neither—to see that these cases, taken together, appear to bring us to a kind of classic late-twentieth-century American legal confrontation. The rights—some would argue, the very existence—of an organization that many claim is a pillar of traditional American community and family ideals are here pitted against the highly politicized interests of aggrieved and therefore entitled excluded groups.

What is at stake, on the one hand, is what constitutes the legal rights of organizations that call themselves private. The superior court judge who ruled in *Curran v. Mount Diablo* wrote:

> The Supreme Court has long recognized a right to "engage in association for the advancement of beliefs and ideas." The converse, a right not to associate, or the right of the group to exclude unwanted members is also recognized. . . . The court concludes . . . that forced inclusion of a Scout Leader who has . . . acknowledged . . . homosexuality . . . would substantially impact the defendant's [the Boy Scouts'] ability to get across its preferred message in its preferred way. The issue, of course, is not whether the defendant's view is correct, or enlightened, or even best calculated to achieve the organization's broader goals. The issue is simply whether application of the Unruh [Civil Rights] Act here would substantially interfere with Mt. Diablo Council's ability to achieve its expressive goals. The court concludes that it would.

But the deeper question hidden beneath the legal battles is who gets to define the essential character of communities. A community needs at some level to define itself to itself. One way it attempts to do so is through activities relating to its children that ensure that, in some way, the unique stamp of a locality or neighborhood will endure and stand out from the ubiquitous national culture.

At present, however, the stakes are more mundane and immediate. The San Francisco School Board has voted not to permit the Boy Scouts to operate in the public schools because of what it deems discrimination. Other school boards are considering similar action. In various parts of the country parent-teacher organizations have quietly dropped their sponsorship of scout troops.

More significant, local United Way chapters are doing the same. On February 20, 1992, the local United Way chapter of San Francisco, with the concurrence of the national organization, dropped its funding of six Bay Area scouting councils that serve nearly 100,000 youths when scout leaders voted unanimously to reject United Way's proposals to change scouting. Confronted with United Way's ultimatum, a scout leader declared, "Our values are not for sale."

A few corporate donors, also from San Francisco, felt morally compelled to withdraw their sponsorship in the spring of 1992. Most notable was Levi Straus and Company, a large importer of cloth that manufactures casual clothing. Ironically, the company's advertising reflects unambiguously heterosexual themes to sell cowboy pants.

On the other side of the battlefield, the Mormon and Catholic churches, who together provide more than one-fourth of the financial support for the Boy Scouts of America, threaten to withdraw their support if homosexuals are admitted. In the words of a spokesman for the National Catholic Committee on Scouting, such a change would be "anti-family, anti-everything."

V

The various groups who hammer at the doors of the Boy Scouts desire a radical transformation of the group's values. One might agree that, after all, many local institutions in American life need a shaking up. The National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey reveals that most Americans in the 1980s supported changes often stamped as "liberal" by earlier generations. Social change seems to be something most Americans are increasingly easy about. Having smashed a few statues in our temple and not having been smitten in return, we now do it more readily, as part of general housekeeping. But research does not yet support the be-

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lief that Americans desire sweeping social change. Perhaps while we want to hear what expounders of radical positions have to say, we feel each case should be taken on its own merits, transforming in cases where it is called for, reforming in some, leaving well enough alone in others. If that is so, assuming we can find a standard, what standard should be applied in each case when the issue is changing an American institution so deeply bound up with American cultural traditions and values? Is there a commonsense standard we might appeal to in each?

If one looks at the case of Elliot Welsh, whose position is that his son should not have to swear an oath in which he professes a belief in God, Mr. Welsh has made some sensible arguments. He points out, for example, that the Declaration of Religious Principle in the application contradicts the Boy Scouts' claim in their literature that "any boy can join" and that the scouts are nonsectarian. He concludes that boys are required to be religious. If he is right, this may mean that teachers violate the First Amendment of the Constitution when they hand out Boy Scout literature during school hours. In his own words:

> BSA [Boy Scouts of America] is fighting for the right to have public school first-grade teachers invite all six-year-old boys in their classes to join Tiger Cubs—only to discriminate against some of them, solely on the basis of the religious beliefs of their parents, after they show enough interest to show up at a meeting.

There are other arguments Welsh might have made. Whether the Boy Scouts claim to be a religious organization or an organization of religious boys, for example, they presumably desire to convert or at least to influence other nonreligious boys. They cannot do that by merely preaching to the choir, so to speak. They need to bring in other boys.

Another example of a sensible argument is one made by girls for why they should be allowed to join. Sometimes there is no local Girl Scout chapter. Even when there is, the leaders may not go in for the open-air activities preferred by some girls in this more physically active era. Margo Mankes, the eight-year-old from Florida who wanted the emergency order to go to Cub Scout camp, says she tried the Girl Scouts but did not find it challenging. Since 1988, the Boy Scouts have had increasing difficulty in finding male volunteers and leaders, and so women have been allowed to be troop leaders.

But these examples of common sense give way upon further reflection. Why would a strongly committed agnostic such as Welsh want his child around children who either believe, or worse, who will take the oath without believing in or understanding it? The argument is somewhat the same for the girls. Boys of scouting age, from roughly age six to eleven, prefer to associate with other boys, or so, at least, psychologists tell us. So are girls going to enter an organization in which they are shunned? Would it not be better for the activists to demand more of the local Girl Scout organization or to start one if one does not exist than to demand such a profound change of the Boy Scouts?

It defies common sense to suppose that homosexuals and nonbelievers are not, were never, nor ever will be in the Boy Scouts, or that Boy Scout membership can prevent future homosexuality or agnosticism. But may we therefore conclude, merely from the past, present, or future presence of these orientations, that those are not permissible disqualifications for membership, especially when the organization claims the oppposite orientation? The spokesman for the Boy Scouts of America made it clear that such orientations do matter to the organization when asked to comment on the Curran trial:

> Our position has always been that scouting represents tradition, or, if you will, family structure and values. It has always been our position that a person living in a homosexual life style does not exhibit a role model that is consistent with traditional or longtime views of scouting. We're not saying that scouting values are for every person in society to live by. If you don't share the values of scouting, perhaps there would be another organization better suited to your interests.

One suspects the motives may be less than idealistic in a few of the cases. Rather than about sexual preference, life-style, or religious belief, some of these lawsuits are motivated by politics and money. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has close ties with some new radical groups, such as the Queer Scouts in Washington, D.C., and the Forgotten Scouts in the Bay Area, whose primary purpose is to introduce homosexuality into the Boy Scouts. The legal crowbars being used by the ACLU to open

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the door of eligibility to the Boy Scouts are the public-accommodation statutes, originally used to regulate hotels and other businesses. In recent litigation, civil libertarians have been arguing that the statutes apply to private clubs, such as the Jaycees. They claim such organizations are not private clubs but career-enhancement groups.

Even as the attempts by the various groups intensifies, one should keep this matter in perspective: the groups and individuals in question simply want to enter the Boy Scouts of America and desire that the organization change to accommodate them. So far they have sought to achieve their goals in a civilized way through legal channels. The German Boy Scouts, by contrast, were infiltrated by radicals, possibly East German Stasi agents, who tore the group apart from within in the 1970s.

VI

Except for the smallest and most remote, all cultures are formed out of many streams. Despite the uniform appearance of American culture to outsiders, the nation's local communities paint an intricate and enigmatic portrait of dynamic cultural life that is difficult to comprehend. Each community leads a life of its own and may be moved by many considerations, not all of them meeting standards of objective rationality or common sense. Communities exist in the real world and must take life as it comes, not up in the pure air of world-transforming hypotheses.

The view exists that the Boy Scouts are hidebound traditionalists, tightly controlled, and directed from a central organization that fights change all the way. The truth, at least at the level of local Boy Scout Councils and Troops, is that some troops may fit the picture, while others are diverse and changing. While some local groups may toe the line, a great deal of flexibility appears to be possible, with the exception of a few central points, such as the Declaration of Religious Belief. As in the case cited above where women are now troop leaders, it seems that when a particular change has already occurred, or consensus has been reached that a reform is needed across a large enough set of the local Boy Scout posts, a critical mass is reached. Then change is mandated at the national level, which is usually uniformly but sometimes variously interpreted and put into action at the local level.

There are abundant examples of local variations and changes. Southern Boy Scouts have responded to criticism by no longer displaying the Confederate battle flag and other regalia in their ceremonies. Margo Mankes was expelled by the regional council but retained by her local troop after she failed to win the emergency court order allowing her to attend Cub Scout camp. In California, a scout troop outside of the Bay Area has resolved to admit homosexuals in defiance of the prohibition of their membership by the Boy Scouts of America. So far no action has been taken to revoke their charter. More than likely nothing will happen. Another example occurred in Chicago, where a troop of Explorer Scouts from the Cabrini Green housing project went on a camping trip to Michigan. They wore gang tattoos, smoked cigarettes along the trail, and listened to the rap group N.W.A. ("Niggers With Attitudes") on their radios. While the national organization frowns on smoking, hate music, and so forth, they welcome the participation of these boys. They feel that participation in scouting can perhaps turn them away from gangs and hatred.

The list of changes in the Boy Scout national organization that appear to be responses to local needs is long. In 1969 young women were admitted into the Explorers and Alpha Phi Omega, the scouting service fraternity on college campuses. The newly revised *Boy Scout Handbook* has already been mentioned. Another program, introduced in 1991 by the national organization called "Learning for Life," is not the Boy Scouts but makes use of scouting techniques and regalia. It admits girls, homosexuals, atheists, and agnostics. It was developed for children between the ages of nine and eighteen, meets in public schools, and is led by four-person teams, including the school principal, a teacher, and two other people from the school or community.

Given the deterioration of the school and family, the decline of respect for authority and religion, and the increased pressures placed on children to pursue destructive pleasures, it has become difficult to be a child in America. Perhaps the Boy Scouts, with their diverse programs, their informal educational emphasis, and traditional values deserve to be left alone to change as their communities change. For the good of both the local and the wider community, or, as they would say, "For God and Country," the Boy Scouts at least lets children be children.

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Mr. and Mrs. Peter Quennell at Home

DUNCAN FALLOWELL

The Quennells live in a cul-de-sac off Regent's Park Road in a part of London that is sensuously pretty—pastel-painted terraces and stucco squares overflowing with trees and flowers, cobbled mews only partly gentrified, a long row of Victorian shops with no chain stores, and up the side of Primrose Hill (weirdly, for anyone living closer to the center of the city than this) no parking restrictions.

A woman in her fifties opens the door. She's extremely thin and alert, in a plaid skirt pulled in tightly at the waist with a belt and a small scarlet scarf tied over her hair; a slash of lipstick is the same color. She scrutinizes me with a coquettish smirk. "Come into the garden for a mo," she says.

"Are you Peter Quennell's daughter?" I ask.

"You *are* kind." She's his current wife.

The house is interestingly untidy and through the back door a Burmese cat called Maximilian lies in the sun. "It's everso nice round 'ere," says Mrs. Quennell in mock Cockney, "but I preferred Chelsea. I had a Queen Anne house in Cheyne Row next door to the Carlyle Museum. Had to sell it a couple of years ago."

She talks a lot through clenched teeth and in that upper-class way (the smart, not the horsey, upper-class way) which is both familiar and astringent, explaining that she's née Kerr from Jedburgh in the Scottish border country. At the same time, she gives me a subtle grilling before showing me up to her husband, whose study occupies the small first floor drawing room.

Peter Quennell was born in 1905, the son of an architect, and of all the important literary figures at Oxford in the 1920s he is perhaps the least known and most enduring. He published his first book (poems) in 1922, before university, and his most recent, *The Pursuit of Happiness* (an extended essay with pictures), in 1988. Between these have been further poems, biography, autobiography, criticism, essays. He's probably received and accepted more invitations than any man alive, and his chief gift as a writer is the polished clarity of his prose. Tap his books and they ring like bells.

He rises in greeting, tall, smoking, thinner even than his wife. The moment he smiles, about sixty of his eighty-five years disappear—a disconcerting effect. He is wearing a navy blue suit, jacket hanging off shoulders owing to the narrowness of his frame, also a navy blue tie with white spots.

"Oh, darling, thank you so much," he breathes as his wife brings him a glass of white wine. Eleven o'clock A.M. Early drinking. When she's gone I ask how often he's been married. "Well, five times, but we don't underline that." And apparently it's been alimony every time.

At Oxford he was famously heterosexual in a rather homosexual era and was rusticated for sleeping with a woman at Maidenhead.

"It was at the beginning of my third year. I could've returned later but I was unrepentant and my father was very good-natured about it and allowed me to travel with the Sitwells to Amalfi. I was very fond of the Sitwells when I wasn't quarreling with them."

"Quarreling about what?"

✪ DUNCAN FALLOWELL is the author of two novels, *Satyrday* and *The Underbelly*, and most recently a travel book, *To Noto*. He is currently preparing a collection of profiles entitled *Him and a Glimpse of Her*.

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"God knows! Nobody knows what one quarrels with the Sitwells about. A quarrel occurs. After the Sitwells I went to Ravenna and in the hotel dining room there I saw a small man with a red beard wedged between two large middle-aged English ladies. Being alone, I eavesdropped on their conversation—it was D. H. Lawrence and he was saying in a faintly north country voice how he disliked all those virgins in the mosaics because they seemed to be like flatfish with two eyes on the same side of the face."

Quennell grew up in Berkhamstead and went to the school there, where Graham Greene's father was headmaster. I ask if he thinks this business of Graham Greene playing Russian roulette with himself as a boy is true or cooked up. PQ drapes his long thin limbs in and around a chair, lights another cigarette with the stub of the previous one, and says, "I don't know. Probably true. But the troubles he describes in his autobiography were completely unapparent to me. I had no idea that he had a nervous breakdown and found him a very agreeable companion. Other friends of ours were the sons and daughters of W. W. Jacobs, the short-story teller. And it was at their house on the outskirts of Berkhamstead that I first met Evelyn Waugh. His elder brother Alec became engaged to W. W. Jacobs's eldest daughter, and one day Alec brought along this very dashing, dandified younger brother in a gray suit and bright yellow waistcoat. This was before Oxford, by the way. It was Hugh Lygon's family who assisted Evelyn in his subsequent attempts to become a member of the upper classes. He took to riding under their direction. Dorothy Lygon told me that he was one of the bravest men she'd ever seen in the hunting field—and one of the worst riders. He was always falling off but gallantly remounting."

There's a voice ululating up the stairs.

"Peter, tu veux encore du vin?"

"Oui, s'il vous plait, darling."

"And what about you?" she asks me, flitting in.

"Un peu du thé? A teabag'll do, Mrs. Quennell."

"Oh God, call me Marilyn. It'll have to be Earl Grey—in a *mug*," she says through clenched teeth, as if the very idea of tea after 10:00 A.M. is disgusting. She is a curious mixture of hostility and affection.

"To go back to Evelyn for a moment," says PQ, "there's one thing which is worth putting on record. During the war he was a very unpopular soldier and his commanding officer said he couldn't be sent on certain expeditions because his men would shoot him in the back. But Bob Laycock, who was a sort of general, told me that Evelyn was without doubt one of the bravest men he'd ever seen. And he described how during the disastrous retreat from Crete, Bob saw Evelyn walking across the field of fire, his soldier servant behind him shivering with terror, and Evelyn not taking cover or anything, just walking straight across in a ridiculous little overcoat."

"After the war he became increasingly difficult."

"Well, he got so enraged about everything, especially when drunk. He was *furious* because I became a member of White's—because I wasn't an Etonian or something. I like White's. It's a refuge—and convenient for the London Library, but the food's not good, one must admit."

Maximilian sidles into the room, and so does Marilyn Quennell with tea and more wine. PQ plays with the animal, then asks, "Darling, has she had any lunch?"

"Darling, it's a bit early for lunch—and it's a him."

"He was having an awful row in my bedroom this morning with Suki, darling."

"Darling, she provokes him. Do you know," says Marilyn turning to me, drinking from PQ's glass, "Suki's had fourteen stitches. We don't know what happened. We think it was her son Maximilian."

"Who's a lovely Maxi, who's a lovely Maxi," purrs PQ. "Oh, Marilyn, don't drink my wine!" he whimpers.

"Just a *sip*." She hits him with her elbow. The atmosphere hereabouts is noticeably feline.

"You see that picture there above my desk? I have it to remind me of the Connollys' lemurs."

"Cyril Connolly was so amusing and anguished," I venture. "Do you suffer from anguish, Peter?"

"Occasionally. And I used to have the most terrible irrational anxieties and panics which took the rather undignified form of feeling physically sick."

An entry in Evelyn Waugh's diary just after

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the Second World War reads: *"On Sunday night Quennell had palpitations of the heart brought on by sexual excess."* And Harold Acton in his second book of memoirs describes how PQ became ill in a country house when chancing upon Acton's first book of memoirs and reading there how fine a poet Quennell was in his youth.

"It is perfectly true, alas, that the poetic impulse abandoned me in Tokyo [where he was briefly a professor of English in the early 1930s; his first marriage came to grief there, too], and I *did* become ill in that house—but from completely different reasons. The illness was of a sentimental kind. Somebody was staying in the house, too—with her husband. I think like most people I occasionally feel rather dotty."

"Oh, you're *totally* dotty, dear!" howls Marilyn in mock Cockney.

"Look here, darling, we don't want too much from you."

"Is the tea all right?" she asks, retying the bow under her chin.

"Now, darling, *please*—I'm answering questions."

"I'm asking *him* if the tea's all right!"

"The tea's sensational, Mrs. Qu—Marilyn. Why did Cyril Connolly have these lemurs?"

PQ's blue eyes follow his wife out of the room, and when she's gone he reassumes his standard position in the chair: legs crossed, wrists hanging off the ends of the chair arms, cigarette wedged between two downward fingers.

"They do make delightful pets. His were slightly incontinent—but not as badly as their coatimundi, which was *very* incontinent and rather a nuisance in that respect. In the forests of Madagascar the lemurs at the top of the trees go into the sunshine for pleasure. The Connolly's lemurs used to sit in front of the gas fire at Rottingdean with their palms towards it, warming their very human-looking hands. I remember seeing Cyril and Jean eating in the gallery of the Café Royal and a lemur's head coming out of the front of Cyril's jacket. He had what the French call the terrible gift of intimacy."

As he talks, the beauty of PQ's voice is almost mesmerizing. It is produced at the front of the mouth and has a richness and balance of expression reminiscent of Sacheverell Sitwell's. He is altogether a most elegant, insouciant figure—even his handwriting and fine black socks are elegant—and it is obvious why he has proven so attractive to women.

"You introduced Cyril Connolly to his second wife, didn't you?"

"Oh my God, Barbara Skelton! Is her new book coming out? I didn't like the many references to myself in her last one." (In that book she describes him as, among other things, *"drunk, lively, violent, wheedling, amusing."*)

"I used to sleep with her and that had its agreeable side—but she could be painful, too. I first met her at the end of the Second War when she was living with de Gaulle's intelligence officer in Mayfair, a Monsieur Boris. Another girl took me to a flat in Shepherd Market and there was this attractive little creature sitting on the edge of the bed—at that moment a bomb exploded in the immediate vicinity which cheered us all up and Barbara opened a bottle of champagne."

PQ's amatory and mobile life kept him short of money. "At one period I was obliged to join an advertising firm." He had no children until fairly recently. (Marilyn is the mother of his only son, Alexander, twenty-two years old, currently at Sandhurst; he also has a daughter, Sarah, by an earlier marriage.) During the war he worked in a succession of government ministries and for a while shared lodgings with Arthur Koestler, "who reproached me for telling people he took baths wearing a hairnet."

After the war he edited the *Cornhill* magazine, then *History Today*, and between marriages shared a house in Regent's Park with George Weidenfeld.

"I came home one Saturday night and found George looking pale and shaken and he said that during my absence the bell had rung and there on the doorstep was a healthy baby neatly packed in a basket. 'What did you do, George?' 'My dear,' he said 'I decided I better not become involved and sent for the police.' "

The phone rings. "Hullo. Who wants her?" Marilyn, who's been hovering on the stairs, takes it in here.

"Oh *hullo*, curator dear."

"That's very typical of her. Curator dear," he observes.

"Shut *up*," she hisses, smacking his leg.

After a long talk about plants, she rings off

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and asks, "You're not going on much longer, are you? Then we can go to the pub for a sandwich."

"Darling, I do hope there's a little bit more to drink. We're getting awfully thirsty here—at least, I am. Betjeman I knew quite well. When he was working for the *Architectural Review*, I went to his office which was very untidy. Betj wasn't there but on his pad in neat gothic capitals were the immortal lines: 'I sometimes think that I should like / To be the saddle of a bike.' "

"What is your working day?"

"I'm not systematic but I usually try to start around 10:00 A.M.. And I write longhand, with a pencil. I can't type. When I edited *History Today* I had a series of excellent secretaries to type for me, but now I have to send things to a lady near Wimbledon Common. I think it's time for lunch, don't you?"

On the stairs we pass the cat Suki who is in the most appalling state, having been mauled almost to death by her son.

"What have you written?" Marilyn asks me in the pub.

PQ's eyes fly up to the ceiling. "Oh God, don't—the *boredom* of it!"

She pulls a tight mouth. Attempting to fill the turbulent silence, I say, "I hear Kingsley Amis is a neighbor of yours."

"Yes, but in fact. . . . "

"She'll go on and on about Kingsley Amis now," he addresses the ceiling. "Reams and *reams* of boredom!"

"What *can* we talk about, DEAR? The inside of pubs? How fascinating!" Her teeth are clenched as if by lockjaw.

PQ chews his beef sandwich, gazing into the distance.

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Schopenhauer at the Englischer Hof

A Monologue

J. R. Solonche

I have been called a pessimist. I am.
What man who calls himself a thoughtful man,
A feeling man, can be ought else? The wine?
The wine is good, but I prefer the beer.
I took no wife because I wanted none.
I live alone because I wish to live
Alone. The passions must be overcome.
I recommend the veal; it's excellent.
The monarchs make a mockery of hope.
My father was a businessman. He killed
Himself when I was seventeen. I left
My mother's house soon afterward because
She chose a life I could not tolerate
To look upon. She was a novelist
You know, received the intellectuals
Of Weimar in her parlor—and her bed.
She let old Goethe bring his Christiane
With him. But when he told her I, her son,
Would be a very famous man, she pushed
Me down the stairs. Her name is only known
Through me, the bitch; who reads her novels now?
I come to dine here almost every day.
Before I start I place a coin—this one—
Beside the plate and when I'm done, I put
The coin back in my pocket once again.
It is a wager that I've made myself
To drop it in the poor box of the church
The day the English officers who dine
At this establishment should talk of else
Than horses, women or dogs.

I have
A dog. His name is Atma—World-Soul.

Why was my masterpiece unrecognized?
Because just those who could have given it

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Publicity—the university
Philosophers—I have attacked in it.
Ah, yes, good man, the veal for both of us.
The rule, "I sing the song of him whose bread
I eat," has always held, and now, too, holds.
I make no living from philosophy.
I have inherited an interest in
My father's firm and that has been enough.
The life of every individual,
When we survey it as a whole and stress
Its most important parts, is tragedy,
But in the details always comedy.
The world is bankrupt in the end and life
A business which does not recoup expense.
All happiness requires ignorance
Or youth, for youth and ignorance are one.
The fear of death is the beginning of
Philosophy, religion's final cause.
Diogenes refused to breathe—and died.
A brilliant victory, but yet how vain!
The more things change, the more they stay the same.
This is the essence of philosophy.
The true philosophy of history
Lies in perceiving this eternal truth.
In general, the wise have always said
The same; the fools have acted all alike
As well and done the opposite. And thus
Reality is suffering and pain.
And thus the genius suffers most of all.

I have—Atma—the World-Soul—I have a dog.

You hear? You hear the English gentlemen?
The coin is in my pocket yet again.

✪ J. R. SOLONCHE's poems have recently appeared in *Mixed Voices: Contemporary Poems about Music*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and the *Cumberland Poetry Review*.

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Writing Historical Fiction

THOMAS MALLON

I became a historical novelist more or less by accident, and I must admit, upon reflection, to the power of nostalgia in making me into one. When I was writing much of *Aurora 7*, a novel set in and around New York City on a single day in 1962, I was living in New York City in 1988. I thought I was writing a book about childhood and chance and the early days of space exploration, but as I proceeded I realized that what was really pushing me along and making me enjoy this book more than any other book I'd written was that I so obviously preferred the idea of living in 1962 to 1988. Having had the kind of happy childhood that is so damaging to a writer, I couldn't help but like being back in that personal Eden where the crabgrass was high and my mom was good-looking.

I was moved by a civic nostalgia, too. The city in which I lived in 1988 was full of anger and plague and misery, just steps away from chaos; whereas at my writing desk, I had the chance to be back in the city from which I remember my commuting father came home one night, around 1962, angry that he had been given a ticket for jaywalking. By 1988 the quaintness of this seemed something to weep over. I know, of course, that Mayor Wagner's New York was a city full of groups awaiting their supposed liberation, and that the cop who wrote that ticket for jaywalking was far more likely to be on the take than any cop of today, but you know what I am talking about. I wanted to float, politically incorrect to the point of bliss, through a past where children got their vaccinations, baby-sitters mixed martinis, and the Yankees won the pennant every year.

The attempt to reconstruct the surface texture of that world was a homely pleasure, like quilting, done with items close to hand. Though *Aurora 7* is set against the background of a very public event—the nearly disastrous space flight of astronaut Scott Carpenter—it was usually what I found in the back pages of newspapers and in advertisements that gave me ideas. I had forgotten, for instance, that the *New York Times* used to publish "Incoming Passenger and Mail Ships," and when I noticed that the *Leonardo da Vinci* docked at 9 A.M. at West 44th Street on the day my novel was to be set, I stumbled toward the scene it would take to put one of my minor characters in motion.

John Updike has written, in an article published in *Picked-up Pieces* (1975), that in fiction "reality is—chemically, atomically, biologically—a fabric of microscopic accuracies." Only through these tiny, literal accuracies can the historical novelist achieve the larger truth to which he aspires—namely, an overall feeling of authenticity. It is just like Marianne Moore's famous prescription for the ideal poet: He must stock his imaginary garden with real toads.

Is there, though, a point at which the letter begins to kill the spirit? Mary McCarthy once spoke of how, while writing her novel *Birds of America*, she was told by someone that the Sistine Chapel, in which she'd set a chapter taking place around New Year's Day in 1965, might have been closed at that time for a Vatican Council. She was aghast. After making inquiries, she was relieved to learn that the chapel had indeed been open when she had her characters in it; but she insisted that had it turned out otherwise she would have thrown away a whole chapter. Who, one might argue, besides some terribly pedantic reader bent on ruining

✪ THOMAS MALLON is the literary editor of *Gentlemen's Quarterly* and the author of *Stolen Words: Forays into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism*, *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries*, and two novels, *Arts and Sciences* and *Aurora 7*.

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the novelists's day with a postcard, would ever have known or cared? While writing the same book, McCarthy called up the Paris weather bureau to check what the skies were doing on the morning of February 8, 1965, a crucial day in the novel, when the hero learns that the U.S. has begun to bomb North Vietnam. In real life there were showers over Paris, and as a result it is raining on page 330 of my copy of *Birds of America*. But again, one might argue, why bother with such a detail when, at a certain point, since you are writing a novel and not history, reality must give way to lies? After all, there never was a boy named Peter Levi, and he never walked to a kiosk at the Madeleine that morning, as he does in *Birds of America*—so if you put his made-up feet on the real-life sidewalk, why can't you stop the real-life rain over his made-up head?

Every historical novelist will decide these things differently, will calibrate his fidelity to the real past along a different scale. In writing *Aurora 7*, I realized early on that I had to move my main character's entire childhood from Nassau County, where I 'd grown up, to Westchester, a place I hardly knew, because Grand Central Terminal was crucial to the plot I had in mind. The commuter trains from Nassau County ran then, as they do now, into Penn Station, not Grand Central. So that was that: I could hardly tamper with the underground infrastructure of the city. I did, however, take certain liberties that I'm sure Mary McCarthy would not have. I have President Kennedy making his remark that "life is unfair" a year earlier than he actually made it. But it was useful to have him say it, so I went ahead. More often, I wondered if I were not becoming crazily slavish in my homage to Clio: for example, I wrote to Procter & Gamble to make sure that Salvo detergent tablets were on the market in May of 1962 before I allowed my character Mary Noonan to drop them into her automatic washer.

At this remove, I would say that I did not go overboard, because it was often in trying to verify a small detail that I got the idea for a crucial scene. I wrote Kodak, too, to find out what transparency they had up in the old Colorama display in Grand Central on May 24, 1962. It turned out to be a shot of the New York City skyline. When I first learned that, I thought it was rather a coals-to-Newcastle banality, but it soon gave me an idea for a way of mentally connecting young Gregory Noonan to his father just before the novel's big moment, and I'm now not sure that any other picture would have worked. Similarly, I over-educated myself about Scott Carpenter's space flight, which was, after all, only the "background" to my story. I had no urgent need to go to the NASA history office in Washington, D.C., or to the National Archives, but I did. And, if I hadn't gone, I would not have found, in a long-forgotten file, the eerie, never-released press release in which Scott Carpenter, the object of my characters' and the nation's worries, is praised for having died a heroic death. Scott Carpenter is alive and well in Colorado today, but the standby statement that Vice President Lyndon Johnson wanted ready still survives in that folder in Washington. In *Aurora 7* the file provides a creepy touch, one I'm not sure I would have imagined on my own. The point is that I didn't need to. It was there, real. I am not saying that truth is always stranger than fiction, but I would assert that the historical novelist quickly finds that the history in which he must work is not so much a straitjacket as a chariot.

He also finds out, or newly realizes, how quickly the present turns into the past. It is not so much the large official chronicles of history that will tell him this, but the more humble documentation of everyday life. In writing *Aurora 7*, I sought out my elementary-school records from thirty years before and was surprised at the touches of antiquity they contained amidst the predictably modern grids of standardized-test scores. The basic school-record card asked, for example, whether or not the child being registered came from a "broken home"—a phrase that reflects an entirely different worldview from a form that provides for, as I suspect the forms do now, "single-parent families." The form filled out in 1958 also asked if the child entering school was "unkempt," a word I cannot imagine being used today. And, along with such well-remembered features of the past as named telephone exchanges ("Murray Hill 3") was a single crystalline flash of an individual personality—my father's—that the school secretary would not have realized she was leaving available for use three decades hence. The form asks that the record keeper take note of "Activities, Hobbies, and Experiences of Parents," and the answer, imparted by my father and still on the form, is "none." That answer verifies my memories of him as incontrovertibly as a fingerprint. He would have said it with a kind of wry mischief, and the secretary would have been charmed,

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but it would also have indicated both the truth of his privacy-loving nature (What business was it of theirs to know?), as well as the whole truth of my parents' lives: other than their children and each other, they had no activities, hobbies, and experiences, and they didn't particularly want any.

To a certain degree I am romancing the past, but that is one's privilege with it. One does not have to fear the past, and I think that is one reason why stories about time machines seem more often directed toward the past than the future. We believe in the past because we have all sorts of proof of it. We instinctively disbelieve in the future because we have no guarantee of it, and, if it occurs, we know that it can lead us to only one place—the grave. The future is yawning and vast, and in our imaginations we measure its distance in a different mathematical "base" than the one we use for measuring the past. The years 1962 and 2022 are equidistant from 1992. But which seems closer? Indubitably, 1962.

Why, if the past is so much more familiar and cherishable than the future, is there a smaller audience for historical fiction than for its opposite, science fiction? I would hazard a guess that, with the exception of its young adherents, who feel naive wonder about the future, the readers of science fiction do not love the future at all, certainly not in the way that readers of historical fiction embrace the past. I think rather that science-fiction novels are read and enjoyed as small weapons against the future we all fear. The science-fiction writer has a chance to play God, whereas it is always too late for the historical novelist to do that. The science-fiction writer reassures himself and his readers with a sort of false prophecy; even if it's a terribly dystopian future that he is imagining—and it usually is—the act of imagining it implies a certain assertion of control over the void.

Aurora 7 concerns itself in part with space exploration, but even this, I realize, is indicative of my taste for the archaic. I am probably less interested in man's future in space than in his past there, the heroic single-pilot days of Project Mercury. What drove my imagination back to them is the same impulse that made my favorite book—in the list of favorites in my sixth-grade autograph book, another homemade document I consulted—turn out to be Howard Pyle's *Men of Iron*, a gloriously clunky tale of knighthood, which my eleven-year-old hero returns to the school library in the middle of *Aurora 7*.

I have had it pointed out to me that at Gregory Noonan's age I was interested not only in medieval times but in the American Civil War, too. My fourth-grade teacher got in touch with me a few years ago to ask if I would like to see a piece of juvenilia she had had in her drawer for twenty-five years. It was our school's literary magazine from the spring of 1962, which contained an essay by me, not about Scott Carpenter but about Abraham Lincoln. Though ostensibly history, this essay from my youth manages to display, in a single page, many of the qualities of the most lumbering historical fiction. One climactic paragraph ends: "The Civil War had at last begun!" and is immediately followed by another paragraph beginning: "The Civil War went on and on."

I have no memory of writing this essay, but its rediscovery does strike me as telltale, since for the last couple of years I have been researching a historical novel involving Colonel and Mrs. Henry Reed Rathbone, who on the night of April 14, 1865, when they accompanied President and Mrs. Lincoln to Ford's Theatre, were as yet only an engaged couple: Major Henry Rathbone and Miss Clara Harris, daughter of Senator Ira Harris of New York.

Henry and Clara had been raised more or less as brother and sister, after Henry's widowed mother married Clara's widowed father. Right here the historical novelist runs into a potentially huge pitfall of anachronistic psychology: yes, things were different then, and kin got married as if they were kith, but just how "normal" was it for a young man and woman in that situation to become engaged? Was there, even in unprurient minds, a whiff of incest about the pair? Just before the shooting, Mary Todd Lincoln and the President were holding hands. She asked her husband, in her coquettish way, what Miss Harris would say if she saw her hanging on to him like this. Lincoln's answer, perhaps even his last remark, was: "Why, she'll think nothing about it." One wonders, was that sly, questing mind of his thinking, in its last moments, "After all, she's about to marry a man who's practically her brother"? You can see that I have my research into this little pocket of social-sexual history cut out for me.

At 10:15 that night, Booth waited for one of

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the play's big laugh lines—Asa Trenchard's calling Mrs. Mountchessington a "sockdologizing old man-trap"—a line he knew would fill the theater with camouflaging noise, before stepping into balcony number seven and firing his pistol at Lincoln's head. He then brutally slashed Major Rathbone's left arm, when the major, finally catching on to what was happening, tried to stop him. Rathbone nearly bled to death; any theater relics thought to be covered with Lincoln's blood were likely drenched with what was pouring from Rathbone's severed artery.

But Rathbone did recover, at Senator Harris's Washington residence, and he did go on to marry Clara, in 1867. They produced three children, one of whom, born on February 12 no less, eventually became a Republican congressman from Illinois. During the 1920s this son was eager to orate upon the Great Emancipator, and he naturally enough recalled his father's fateful position on the night of the assassination. But he left off the end of his parents' story. On Christmas Eve morning in 1883, in a boarding house in Germany, Henry Rathbone killed Clara, as their three children slept in another room of the suite. Rathbone then turned a knife on himself and claimed that the violence had been the work of an intruder. Once again he recovered from his wounds, to be committed to a mental asylum in Germany, where he lived until 1911. In fact, he was still alive on the day Ronald Reagan was born.

As I go about reconstructing this story, school records once again prove helpful. Both Henry and his guardian—who was also his future father-in-law—Ira Harris, attended Union College. School records show that Senator Harris was graduated first in the class of 1824, whereas Henry, three decades later, was, to be generous about it, a mediocre student. He was sometimes fined for failing to attend prayers and recitations, and in the summer of 1854 he was charged thirteen cents for breaking some glass. My sense of Henry is that he was a bad job from the beginning—not just unhinged by his bloody service with the Twelfth Infantry or any whispers of incompetence that followed his failure to save Lincoln—and this broken pane of glass, still present and accounted for in a ledger that has survived for 138 years, has given me the idea for a scene in which he will display, early in the story, a little fit of temper.

Diaries were my first real love as a literary critic, and not surprisingly they are proving useful to me now. There is none by Clara that has survived; but one kept by Henry's cousin, J. Howard Rathbone, now in the Albany Institute of History and Art, has confirmed my suspicion that Clara must have had a lively streak of wit. She was, after all, Mrs. Lincoln's friend, and the clever, high-strung first lady would have been bored by milksops. Sure enough, on April 21, 1859, I found that J. Howard Rathbone paid a call on the Harrises in Albany, after which he praised Clara for talking "better than usual, she was less sarcastic."

The National Archives in Washington contain a series of communications—one of them composed on the newly improved typewriter—that passed among the U.S. consulate in Hanover, the U.S. legation in Berlin, and the State Department in Washington at the time of Henry's murder of Clara in Germany. As rich in glimpses of the Rathbones as these documents are, none of them can compare with a letter written by Clara, from her father's house in Washington, on Tuesday, April 25, 1865—eleven days after the assassination and a matter of hours before Booth's capture, which would occur in Virginia at two o'clock the next morning. It is written to a friend named Mary (we don't know any more about her than that). The letter, given to the New-York Historical Society in March 1973 after having been the property of Miss Edith Wetmore of Beekman Place, reads in its entirety as follows:

My dear Mary:

I received your kind note last week, & should have answered it before, but that I have really felt, as though could not settle myself quietly, even to the performance of such a slight duty as that—Henry has been suffering a great deal with his arm, but it is now doing very well,—the knife went from the elbow nearly to the shoulder, inside,—cutting an artery, nerves & veins—He bled so profusely as to make him very weak—My whole clothing, as I sat in the box was saturated literally with blood, & my hands & face—You may imagine what a scene—Poor Mrs. Lincoln all through that dreadful night would look at me in horror & scream, Oh! My husband's blood,—my dear husband's blood—which it was not, though I did not know it at the time. The President's wound did not bleed externally at all—The brain was instantly suffused.

When I sat down to write I did not intend alluding to these fearful events, at all—but I really cannot fix my mind on anything else—Though I try my best to

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think of them as little as possible—I cannot sleep, & really feel wretchedly—Only to think that fiend is still at large—There was a report here yesterday that every house in the District of Columbia was to be searched to day—I hoped it was true, as the impression seems to be gaining ground that Booth is hidden in Washington—Is not that a terrible thought!

Mr. Johnson is at present living in Mr. Hooper's house opposite us—A guard are walking the street in front constantly—

It will probably be two or three weeks before Mrs. Lincoln will be able to make arrangements for leaving. She has not left her bed since she returned to the White House that morning—

We expect to be able to leave next week for New York—but on what day, it would be impossible yet to say—I will write you in time however. So that I shall be sure to see you, while there—

Please give my love to all the family, & believe me

Ever truly yours,
Clara H.

There are three details in the letter that arrest me. The first is that small detachment of soldiers tramping outside Mr. Hooper's house, guarding President Johnson: I can now imagine Henry, upstairs, in pain, both maddened and lulled by the sound of their boots. Second is the blood on Clara's face: something literally too ghastly to imagine. A novelist would think of her dress, of course, but the face? Finally, what interests me most is the information that instead of accompanying her fiancé back to Senator Harris's house at Fifteenth and H Streets, Clara stayed "all through that dreadful night" with Mrs. Lincoln at the Petersen House, across from Ford's Theatre. It is easy to make too much of information such as this, but if a historical novelist scrupulously decides to make too little of everything, then he should not be writing fiction at all.

One of the ironies of the so-called information age we live in is that we are leaving behind less written material for the biographer and novelist than we used to. I would suspect that in November of 1963 after President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, Mrs. John Connolly was telephoning friends to tell them what she had gone through in Dealey Plaza. One is glad that Clara did not have a phone, but she and Henry were part of the first generation of people to be photographed, and the historical novelist writing about the nineteenth century is always grateful for the tintype gold mine left him by Matthew Brady and the new fraternity of portrait photographers. The novelist will want to "read" these photographs for the obvious help they can provide in getting his characters properly dressed and—more perilously—for clues to their psychology. Is Henry's posture neurotically ramrod in that picture? Does Clara's forlorn expression indicate resignation toward a bad mistake she knows she has already made? Or are these just the insignificant products of studio convention and long exposure times?

When I worked on *Aurora 7*, I was immeasurably helped by the Museum of Broadcasting's acquisition of CBS television's daylong coverage of the Carpenter space flight. I was able to watch hour after hour of old films that had been conveniently transferred to videotape cassettes. Curiously enough, the fuzzy black-and-white images from the still primitive television of that era make the real-life characters involved in Carpenter's big day look almost as remote as the sepia figures of Civil War photographs. There is a comparable ghostliness about them—a quality that future historical novelists and historians writing about our own day will not have the imaginative opportunity to struggle with. As our century ends, we are thoroughly videotaping it in a high-density, color accuracy that will preserve it with an everlasting immediacy. One new fact that the novelist must confront is that from now on history is never again going to look terribly historical.

Getting things to look right is the historical novelist's paramount task. He already faces every other novelist's challenge to keep things moving, get them resonating, and put them into language that has some life, but he has the additional, crucial burden of making a world that functions believably, sentence after sentence, an environment for his characters that is not just a decorated set or a curated museum. Part 1 of my novel about the Rathbones begins on an evening in May of 1845 with the newly widowed Senator Harris writing replies to letters of condolence he has received upon the death of his first wife, Clara's mother. I got a sentence or two into the scene before I had him lighting an Argand lamp: I'd heard of those, and I knew it was reasonable for one to be on his desk in the 1840s. But how exactly did one light them? Would that already have been done by the servant girl? Would she have been Irish? Or maybe, outside Albany at that time, still more plausibly, Dutch? Success, like

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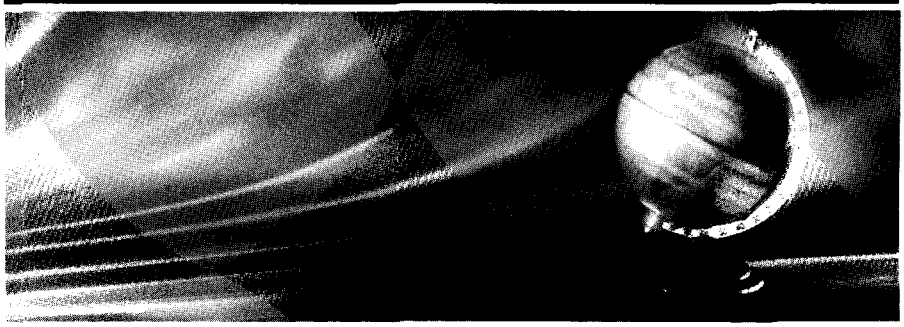

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God, lies in the details, and 1845, I quickly realized, would take a lot longer to reconstruct than 1962. In fact, my publisher might as well know it now: I'm never going to make my deadline.

Any historical novelist could do well to keep Ford's Theatre in mind as he goes about his business, for the theater as it now exists is really just a persuasive illusion. Converted into government offices in the years after Lincoln's assassination, the structure soon had no more stage, no more orchestra pit, no more balcony. In 1893 a huge portion of this new bureaucratic interior simply collapsed—as if in rebellion against modernity, three floors gave way while the basement was being excavated for the installation of electricity. (If one counts Lincoln, twenty-three people have lost their lives in the building on Tenth Street.) Not until the 1960s was the theater restored to its exact condition of April 14, 1865. As such, it is a kind of parallel universe, and standing in it you can't be sure which items were there on that night and which are copies. In other words, where are the real toads in this imaginary garden? Lincoln's rocker is a replica; the crimson damask sofa, however, is the actual one on which Major Rathbone sat. The flags are reproductions; but the steel engraving of George Washington, which they surround, was in fact hanging there in 1865. Yet, since the whole balcony is a reconstruction, can any of the actual items really be said to be where they were on the night of the assassination? As you think about these things, history turns into metaphysics, a kind of college philosophy problem. Nonetheless, to walk through Ford's Theatre now is to experience an extraordinary feeling that you are where it happened and that this is just how it looked. Simply put, it works. The restorers have done their job without any anachronisms to break the spell for the historically susceptible. In fact, they may have succeeded too well: knowing that performances are once more put on at Ford's, and are on occasion even attended by the president of the United States, makes the historical novelist wonder if the book he is preparing to set here hasn't vanished, before it is written, in a kind of post-modernist joke.

Why, finally, does one read historical fiction? Victorian theologians frequently subscribed to the idea of typology—namely, that almost every incident and person found in the New Testament is prefigured in the Old. Progressive literary critics still hope for a similar relationship between the world of historical fiction and the contemporary scene. Sometimes it even exists: William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner*, for example, was a controversial allegory of the American racial dilemma that existed a century after the novel's action takes place. But for the most part even these progressive critics will admit that we no longer go to historical fiction for explanation so much as for exoticism. Georg Lukács, the pre-eminent Marxist critic of the genre, lamented in *The Historical Novel* how, a century after Sir Walter Scott, whose historical fiction was prized for its relevance, historical novels were being read because they were so irrelevant, so appealingly strange.

Is this really so terrible? I think the idea of historical fiction as the prototype of current reality is a bit like a planned Marxist economy—something that looks better on paper than it does while waiting in line. Moreover, I think that readers always liked historical fiction, not because they wanted to drag history into the present and make it useful, but because they wanted to put themselves back into history, into the past, to wander around it as if in a dream, to ponder themselves as having been born too late—a much more common feeling than the feeling that one has been born too soon. Avrom Fleishman, author of *The English Historical Novel*, says that historical fiction performs the improving function of making us see ourselves as historical creatures—that is, persons shaped by large forces and currents. I think that historical fiction more commonly encourages us to see ourselves as historical accidents, to experience what it might have felt like if, my God, it had been us, not Peanut John, who had innocently agreed to hold John Wilkes Booth's horse around 9:30 P.M. on that Good Friday evening. The historical novelist will always have to listen to a mass of dismissive wisdom advising him to abandon his subject. He will be told, by literary theoreticians: "That was then; this is now." But he should just hold firm, and wait ten seconds before replying, by which time the "now" being discussed will already have become *his* territory, namely, the past.

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Question of Style

MINOR PROPHECIES: THE LITERARY ESSAY IN THE CULTURE WARS. *By Geoffrey H. Hartman. Harvard University Press. $29.95.*

Reviewed by Arthur Krystal

Near the beginning of *Enemies of Promise*, that strange alloy of literary criticism and autobiography, Cyril Connolly contends that "it should be possible to learn as much about an author's income and sex-life from one paragraph of his writing as from his cheque stubs and his love letters." Though this is probably more of a conceit than firm conviction (one can barely identify a writer's sex, much less sex life, from what may be a few impersonal sentences), Connolly was expressing a general confidence in style's transparency. "It is most true, *stylus virum arguit*, our style betrays us," wrote Robert Burton—a thought later immortalized in Buffon's: "Le style est l'homme même."

It is, of course, far easier to point out style's effects than to define its essential quality. Connolly proposes that literary style is roughly divisible into the Mandarin and the Vernacular. The former, served up by Sir Thomas Browne, Addison, Dr. Johnson, Gibbon, Ruskin, Pater, Wilde, and Henry James, rejoices in complexity, eloquence, and subtlety, unfurling them in one dependent clause after another. The Vernacular is a less formal affair, whose practitioners—Hazlitt, Butler, Shaw, Wells, Gissing, Orwell, and Maugham—draw on patterns of ordinary speech and the brisk rhythms of journalism. The line separating the two styles, however, is a fluid one. There is "a relationship between them," Connolly observes, "a perpetual action and reaction," which began with the rise of Fleet Street and the founding of the literary *Reviews* toward the end of the eighteenth century.

Connolly's own thoughts on style were written a few short years before the Second World War. Since then much has changed in the way literary criticism is regarded and practiced both here and abroad. In fact, the change has been so drastic that Geoffrey Hartman, the Karl Young Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Yale, is within his rights to subsume the Mandarin and the Vernacular under one rubric, variously called the Familiar-, the Conversational-, or, rather cloyingly, the Friendship-Style. Now competing with the old lettristic style is the theoretical or academic style, defined by Hartman as "prose with a noticeable proportion of technical terms." Of course, Hartman means much more by this than an infusion of mouthy words, and though there is little that is stylish about theoretical discourse, it *is* a style, for only as a style can it have the broad and deep cultural implications he ascribes to it.

Hartman, who has written elsewhere on detective fiction and the movies, as well as on subjects befitting his position, has given *Minor Prophecies* the subtitle *The Literary Essay in the Culture Wars* because, despite its other concerns, this is a book about the tension between the two kinds of critical style. And though Hartman goes out of his way to assure us that this tension, like that between the Mandarin and the Vernacular, is beneficial, and that both styles have their uses, and that the contemporary polemic about the two styles is really "the product of a misunderstanding," just about everything he says regarding theory's emergence speaks for its superiority.

Committed to a point of view, but not to a sustained argument, the book's ten chapters explore differences between Anglo-American and Continental criticism, the origins of the review-essay, the politics of literary restitution, and the place of F. R. Leavis and Paul de Man, among others, in the intellectual pantheon. But because this is first and foremost a book about critical prose and the status of the essay as "a reflective and clarifying genre," one may perhaps compress and restructure the broken, underlying argument into a three-tiered thesis, although not without the inevitable loss in nuance and complexity: (1) All forms of writing designate a relationship between writer and public; between the written word and the world it signifies. (2) By implication then, style demonstrates both an ability and a willingness to comprehend and participate in a worldview that is successive and grounded in history. (3) And by extension, style embodies the increasing self-consciousness that history has forced upon us—a process, which, if understood, may have both a practical and transcendent dimension.

To put it in even blunter terms: Because the

ARTHUR KRYSTAL is the editor of Jacques Barzun's *The Culture We Deserve*. His reviews have appeared in *Harper's*, the *New York Times Book Review*, and other publications.

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theoretical style has established itself in the world of letters, there must be valid reasons for its success. The generative cause, for Hartman, is to be found in the emotional reaction to the First World War. Citing Valéry's comment that "something deeper has been worn away than the renewable parts of the machine . . . our fears are infinitely more precise than our hopes," he suggests that the disturbed balance of hope and dread has informed our thinking about the world and the word. How much more this balance was affected by the horrors of the next world war remains, of course, unquantifiable. But this mournful assessment of history is today almost certainly taken for granted. Francis Fukuyama, for example, begins *The End of History and the Last Man* by claiming: "The twentieth century, it is safe to say, has made all of us into deep historical pessimists."

Such pessimism not only clouds the future but also permeates the physical and philosophical present. A loss of faith in the capacity to know either ourselves or nature in any absolute sense distinguishes us from the generations born before 1900. Matter, or the atoms that constitute it, can be neither defined nor measured without allowing for statistical probabilities. And words, as Saussure and his church of latter-day signifiers continue to preach, have no referents. Thinking about thinking has taken a strange, impersonal turn—as has thinking about literature. The analytic displacement of German philosophy and its explicit concern with subjective intentionality (which later turns up in phenomenology and existentialism) by schools of thought that examine the unconscious representations of self and society embodied in our artifacts, especially language, has made, as everyone will agree, a deep impression on literary criticism. Instead of wrestling with manifestations of individual genius or will, theory-minded critics—structuralists, semioticians, and deconstructionists—emphasize the linguistic properties of prose, exposing the unconscious interplay between social and semiotic structures.

In effect, Hartman offers us a historical brief for the critical style that goes by the name of theory. The decorum of the conversational style was fine when we knew less and hoped for more, but it is unrepresentative of the postmodern perspective. Indeed, its civility, wit, temperateness, and unmediated belief in the civilizing influence of art may actually be inappropriate in light of the barbarism that haunts our century—the barbarism that prompted Adorno's injunction regarding the writing of poetry after Auschwitz.

That a certain ineffectuality exists where belles lettres meets science or politics is, I think, unarguable. But is theoretical criticism any more equal to the task? Hartman believes it to be, but his justification subtly begs the question; one cannot demonstrate an idea's or an event's inalienable rightness by adducing everything that preceded it. History happens and makes things happen, but what conclusions can we draw regarding a thing's historical appositeness? Yes, the Great War shocked artists and intellectuals; and yes, the ideas of Wittgenstein, Saussure, the Vienna Circle; the Frankfurt School, psychoanalysis, Heidegger, World War II, structuralism, deconstruction, hermeneutical theory, not to mention the French radicals' demand for a new language to replace the nasty old values implicit in bourgeois discourse, all had their effects on literature. The question that needs asking, however, is whether such effects are significant in any but a temporal sense; how much weight does being representative of the times carry? For Hartman, the issue is plain. Intellectual history has tossed up literary theory, and so despite the benefits supposedly to be gained from the tension between the theoretical and the conversational style, Hartman has no qualms about declaring that the "gain of literary theory in the 1970s was a gain in thoughtfulness."

Which brings us to the second point, concerning the intellectual endowment of the two styles. Is there, as Hartman suggests, a sense of things accessible to one style but not to another? Furthermore, should what "is important in art be translatable into terms of colloquial prose, or does the effort coopt the work of genius, repressing its asocial or antisocial component? And, again, does the insistence that criticism imitate the seeming clarity of public speech neglect the creativeness of critical prose itself, both as a technique of discovery and a style developed over time?"

Although such questions suggest a willingness at least to consider the limitations of the theoretical style, only someone who firmly hews to the greater efficacy of the theoretical over the conversational could approve of the following exegetical model:

> The necessary, originary, and irreducible dissimulation of the meaning of being, its occultation within the very blossoming forth of presence, that retreat

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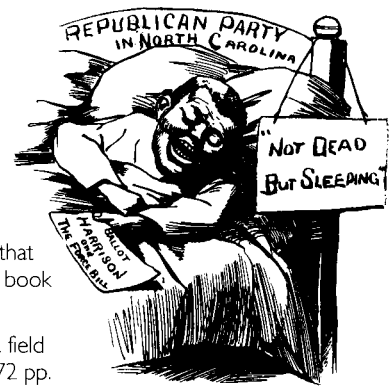

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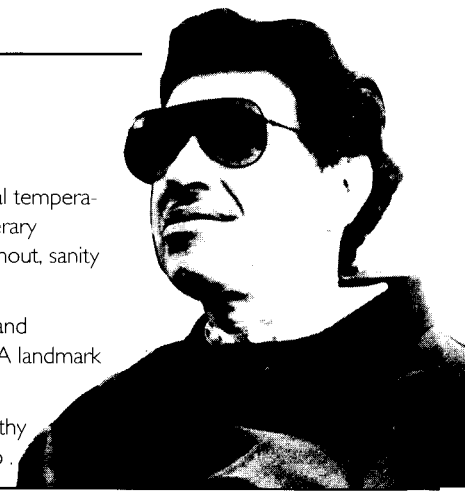

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without which there would be no history of being which was completely *history* and history of *being*. Heidegger's insistence on noting that being is produced as history only through the logos, and is nothing outside of it, the difference between being and the entity—all this clearly indicates that fundamentally nothing escapes the movement of the signifier and that, in the last instance, the difference between signified and signifier is *nothing*. (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*)

Or could himself write:

Yet theory too is often associated by us with the contrary of a critical position, with a systematic or ideological closure that appropriates one part of existence, or of language, at the expense of others. Theory is then accused of forgetting its own positivity, that it is not nature, that no neutral totality exists, and that totalization should be in the service of a critical or comparative counter-perspective. Indeed, totalization, and its most obvious figure, prolepsis, cannot be avoided, because we are always situated. The domain of preunderstanding (what we have always already known) coheres us, makes understanding, in all its error, possible, makes dialogue and agreement possible.

Regular readers of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR may be excused for thinking this is all flapdoodle, but it is also necessary to say that many intelligent men and women, mostly academics to be sure, will feel perfectly at home with these sentences. For such readers, the problematic nature of both mind and language requires a style that is emblematic of such difficulty. This being the case, any attempt to review a book of theory in the conversational style may itself be only a futile gesture in translation. Still, one bravely pushes on.

In fact, cautions Hartman, the critic who relies on the conversational style "because of its propriety may actually be doing a disservice to language [so much for his professed acceptance of this style]. However difficult Blackmur, Burke, Heidegger, or Derrida may be, there is less entropy in them than in those who translate with the best intentions hazardous ideas or expressions into ordinary speech." Apparently, hazardous ideas, presumably those we may find disconcerting, lie outside the scope of ordinary, as opposed to theoretical, discourse; and ultimately the deeper meaning of texts can be rendered only in a technical metalanguage. The unstated correlation is with particle physics, which requires a language of symbols and mathematical equations to express newly discovered relations among mass, energy, and the observer.

Some remarks by Paul Ricoeur may prove instructive here. After noting that scientific language, by aspiring to the ideal representation of nature, is contextually neutral (since its truth is *already* the truth of what is being described), Ricoeur argues that ordinary language "differs from an ideal language in that it has no fixed expressions independent of their contextual uses . . . the interpretative process as it occurs in the use of ordinary language foreshadows the more difficult, evasive, and complicated interpretation of texts." In other words, it is precisely because "there is something irreducible in ordinary language" that we are able to communicate and interpret communication legitimately.

To take this further, even theoretical language is, at bottom, ordinary. Try as they might, literary theorists cannot earn scientific accreditation; all that the theorist can do is pull and stretch ordinary language to make it accommodate abstruse philosophical concepts. Needless to say, the language of philosophers, with one or two exceptions, has been tough sledding ever since Aristotle decided to get technical; and it is a thorny issue indeed whether its difficulty is essential to, or commensurate with, the difficulty of its ideas. Much the same thing, of course, can be said about literary theory. Are there really thoughts not only too deep for tears but also for the familiar vocabulary?

Difficult to say. Language, after all, not only expresses thoughts but also makes possible thoughts that could not exist without it. Just how it accomplishes this or what role esoteric words play are issues still in need of clarification. Nevertheless, an uncomplicated style does not necessarily reduce texts to uncomplicated ideas. But what the conversational style does avoid is the cognitive quagmire that all epistemological questions ultimately sink into. The idea of the duality between subject and object, between the truth of a thing and knowing the thing, puts philosophical language through some amazing loops, circumvolutions that attest to the impossibility of absolute answers.

Hartman is not unmindful of the problem. He mentions repeatedly the "impasse" created by deconstructionist theory and concedes willingly enough the "methodological pathos" at the heart of deconstruction, "a mourning over the self-invalidating nature of all methodologies." Still, one cannot help feeling that he would rather mourn than not know enough to mourn.

To his credit, he does not condone difficulty

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for its own sake. He believes that the problematic nature of interpretation and the self-referential process of thinking have fashioned a style whose difficulty is suggestive of the greater problems it deals with. Clarity is hardly the point. And while Hartman would, I think, frown on those who maintain that clarity, being part of a bourgeois value system, is another form of oppression, he might agree that clarity has been overrated—an opinion that unfortunately has found a home in the academy.

Which brings us to Hartman's third point: the place of theory in contemporary culture. It seems that our need for theory is "linked to a change in the environment: the rise of propaganda, organized lying and ideological falsification." Evidently, it is in theory's power to see through and disclose our spiritual failings. Likening this unmasking capability to Talmudic commentary, Hartman muses that: "We have something to learn from a religious culture in which the creative energies went almost totally into commentary, and the same basic method of reading was used for law (halakhah) and lore (aggadah)."

But whatever his hopes for literary theory, Hartman never quite demonstrates just how this interpretative process leads to the realization that a "critical essay, a legal opinion, an interpretation of Scripture, a biography, can be as inspiring and nurturing as poem, novel, or painting." Rather, it is all too evident that theory's involvement with a text is really a means to get more intimately involved with itself, and to stake out a position independent of literary sources.

Theory reigns. Not in the literary reviews or in the general press, but certainly in the majority of books issuing from university presses and in many graduate schools from Yale to Berkeley. And up to a point, readers who take literature seriously must familiarize themselves with the works of Adorno, Benjamin, Lukács, Barthes, Derrida, Paul de Man, and another half-dozen or so philosopher-critics whose works have affected the way literature is taught.

But such an acknowledgment is a far cry from avowing that the entire panoply of twentieth-century intellectual thought justifies theory's eminence in contemporary literature departments. There are, after all, less exalted reasons for this phenomenon, including the conspicuous absence in the last quarter century of writers of genius, a fact that may have something to do with how critics regard their own labors. Nor can we dismiss the allure that a professional insularity has for some teachers and critics. Once it became clear that the shift from belles lettres to literary specialization was a going concern, and that a familiarity with what might be considered more analytical disciplines—philosophy, linguistics, anthropology—was essential to advancement, many English professors took to the theoretical style and never looked back. In a word, clarity was no longer a good career move.

Like it or not, one must admit that Hartman argues from strength: literary theory has exploded myths and assumptions about meaning and intentionality, rushing past the poetic source to grapple with the mental categories that determine how we create and receive verbal information. And what is implicit in theory's program (a point that Hartman avoids) is its demotion of individual talent. The emphasis on common semiotic structures in all forms of discourse is what, after all, brought about the death of the author and the current skepticism concerning the usefulness of "quality" and "beauty." Indeed, the technical jargon and impersonal tone of the theoretical style perfectly mirror an age in which individuality in art is no longer prized.

Will this style prevail? That depends, I think, not so much on historical forces as on a human need for harmony and certitude. "Our language," remarked Cyril Connolly, "is a sulky and inconstant beauty and at any given moment it is important to know what liberties she will permit." Few academic critics today seem aware of the existence of the proprieties: the only style that is intellectually appropriate is one that demonstrates just how involuted, uncertain, fragmentary, and perpetually in flux the process of thinking is.

Agreed, there are good reasons not to cease from mental fight. Metaphysical and linguistic questions need to be pondered, however inconclusive our speculations prove to be. But we may also ask ourselves whether such deliberations can be profitably turned to the study of literature. There is something about art that resists theory, just as there is something about existence that defies unbiased or conclusive judgments. To do art, one must cease from philosophizing; to offer criticism of art, one must walk a fine line between art and philosophy, never leaning too far in either direction.

A man who knew something about theory once described philosophy as thinking that reveals

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that the simple is complicated, that doubts may reside in firmly held convictions, and that even the most plausible premises are vulnerable to logical attack. "The net result of these speculations," added Bertrand Russell, "is to substitute articulate hesitation for inarticulate certainty." Without wishing either to detract from speculative thought or insist on a simplistic and apodictic universe, one may choose, where literature is concerned, a little less articulate hesitation, a little more inarticulate certainty. Without this faith in things and words, neither art nor criticism can truly matter to us.

Bad-Mouthed

EDGAR A. POE: MOURNFUL AND NEVER-ENDING REMEMBRANCE. *By Kenneth Silverman. HarperCollins. $27.50.*

Reviewed by DONNA RIFKIND

The case of Edgar Poe seems as open and shut as the Rue Morgue murders: Poe is generally considered the spooky sideshow of American literature, an enfant terrible whose storytelling was as puerile and sordid as his everyday behavior. Emerson dismissed him as "the jingle man," while Henry James wrote that "an enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection." For T. S. Eliot, Poe had "the intellect of a highly gifted young person before puberty," while Paul Elmer More called him "the poet of unripe boys and unsound men."

Surely no writer in our country's literary history has a more maligned reputation than Poe. It is one of the many ironies of the Poe legend that he remains a cherished icon of modern French literature but a favorite object of ridicule in his native land. The complex reasons for this are discussed thoroughly in Kenneth Silverman's new biography. Here the scattered facts and fabrications of Poe's life and works—ravens, revenants, alcoholic ramblings, crumbling mansions, child brides, live burials—are carefully sorted out and examined by Mr. Silverman, a professor of English at New York University as well as the author of a Pulitzer Prize–winning life of Cotton Mather.

DONNA RIFKIND's reviews have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New Criterion*, and THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

The truth, as Mr. Silverman shows, is that Poe's case is far from open and shut. Most writings about him, both critical and biographical, seem incomplete; Poe is one of those writers about whom nearly all ostensibly definitive statements can be refuted. Mr. Silverman's skill as a biographer lies in his deep appreciation for the complexity and ambiguity of his subject, and in his patience in showing exactly how Poe's life was translated into his work.

Poe's brief life may be seen as a series of agonizing losses and rejections that were repeated again and again, with changing characters and intensifying pain, over the forty years that were allotted to him. He was two years old in 1811 when his mother, a popular young stage actress named Eliza Poe, died destitute in Richmond, Virginia; his father, an actor known for drinking and debt, had disappeared in 1809 and was never heard from again. Young Edgar was raised—but never formally adopted—by a wealthy Richmond tobacco broker named John Allan. Stern but well-meaning, and a great believer in liberal education, Allan saw his ward through a first year at the brand-new University of Virginia in Charlottesville. But the relationship soured after Allan refused to settle the boy's large gambling debts or to pay for his second year at the university. Now eighteen and seething with resentment, Edgar left Virginia for Boston with plans to become a great writer.

While he published a first book, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, anonymously in 1827, Poe's writing career was not launched overnight. After a brief stint in the United States Army, he persuaded a grudging John Allan to finance his enrollment at West Point. When Allan's softhearted wife Fanny died and he remarried, however, Poe was cut off for good. Shortly afterward he was asked to leave West Point for neglecting his academic duties. And no sooner had Poe lost Fanny, who had been a second mother to him, and been shunned by Allan, the only father he had ever known, than his older brother Henry died, a possible suicide, at age twenty-four—the same age Eliza Poe had been when she died.

Poe found refuge in Baltimore with his aunt, Maria Clemm, a poor, proud, and motherly soul who shared with her nephew a habit, as Mr. Silverman notes, of "casual even automatic resort to the pity of others," begging and borrowing at every opportunity. Since cadging from John Allan was no longer possible, Poe now began

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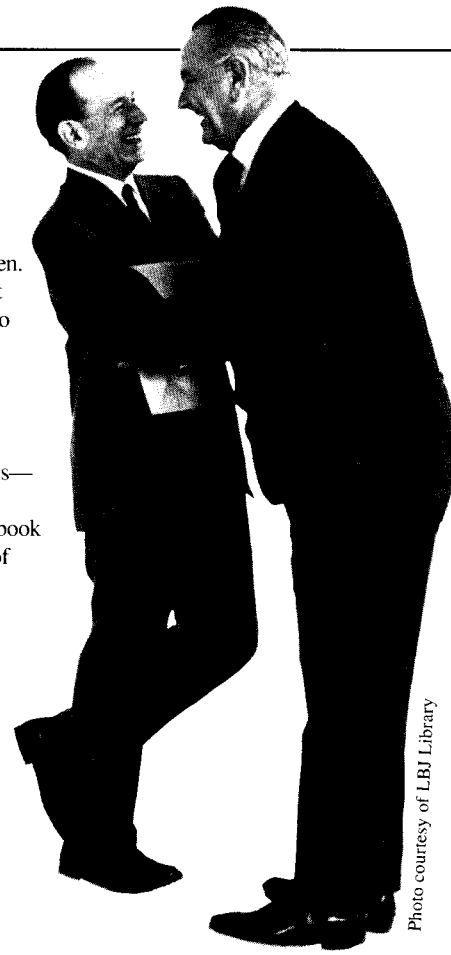

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to write short fiction for money, attracting some attention for his "MS. Found in a Bottle," and in the early 1830s he went to work as an editor for the *Southern Literary Messenger*, which also published his tales and reviews.

The *Messenger* was a popular Richmond journal that had been launched during a rapid growth spurt of American magazines and magazine readers. Poe's dealings with the journal's editor, another father figure named Thomas Willis White, were nearly as rocky as his relationship with John Allan had been. White disapproved of Poe's self-destructive drinking binges, but he was also well aware of the younger man's ability to recognize the appetites of the burgeoning reading public. Americans wanted, said Poe in a letter to White, "the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque: the fearful coloured into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical."

Certainly Poe's tales of this period ("Berenice," "Morella," "Metzengerstein") followed his own specifications. As Mr. Silverman notes, Poe was drawing—and in many cases improving—on an enormously popular Gothic tradition, while in the meantime "becoming the first writer in English, or perhaps in any modern literature, to consistently apply to prose fiction some of the techniques of poetry." He was also developing some notoriety as a mercilessly scrupulous book reviewer, thrashing best-selling novels in the *Messenger* during a period in American letters when "criticism" usually meant little more than a few gentlemanly compliments for one's best friend's books.

Though it won Poe a fair amount of fame, all of this furious literary activity was not yielding him much money. His financial situation was causing him considerable anxiety, as he now had a household to support: in September 1835 he had secretly married his thirteen-year-old cousin Virginia, Aunt Maria's daughter, and the three of them had become an inextricable unit, doubly and triply the family Poe had always craved. Virginia was his wife but also "Sissy," whom he preferred to regard as an ever-helpless child; Maria was "Muddy," or Mother; and Poe was son, brother, husband, and father-provider all at once.

It was a bizarre domestic arrangement, even for the pre–Civil War South, but it worked—or it would have worked if a grinding round of trouble had not interfered. Though he labored fervently at his craft during a time, as Mr. Silverman writes, when "the profession of authorship was only now coming into existence in America," his finances were perpetually in a state of crisis; a national economic depression, beginning in the late 1830s, did nothing to help. Neither did he much appreciate performing endless editorial scut work while his superiors took all the credit. Poe's constant haggling with White for more control led to his dismissal from the *Messenger*. There were similar altercations with a succession of editors at other literary magazines, all humiliating reminders of his original rejection by John Allan.

Poe's most productive years coincided with a period of great anxiety in literary America. There was much concern that the young country's literature was vastly inferior to that of Europe and especially England; there was chagrin as well that America had not yet produced a great poet. Poe saw himself as that great poet, and yearned to be regarded as a premier tastemaker who would use his own poems, tales, and criticism to guide Americans along the correct literary path. The methods with which he chose to launch this campaign, however, were far from successful. His fractious critical efforts to unseat the literary lions of the day—including repeated accusations that Longfellow was a plagiarist—made him many lifelong enemies. And while the dearest hope of his career, that of launching his own literary magazine, came tantalizingly close to fruition several times, his own stubbornness and impossibly high standards prevented it from ever becoming a reality.

In 1842, Sissy, now nineteen, began showing the first sings of the tuberculosis that would kill her five years later, after a tortured decline. At this time Poe began drinking in earnest, medicating himself against the pain of this certain loss. After Sissy died, Poe was all but broken—penniless, friendless, and wretched. He searched for consolation by proposing marriage to various literary ladies who were captivated by the romantic image of this now famously haunted author. But his heart was not in it, and he sank into suicidal despair, finally dying alone in Baltimore of exposure and delirium tremens.

"I fled in vain." This line repeats throughout one of Poe's most famous tales, "William Wilson," and it is the central theme of his life as well. In such stories as "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Masque of the Red Death," what seems to be supernatural fantasy actually has a solid foundation in the real-life snare of misfortune from which Poe could never escape. Faced with repeating horrors—the early deaths of mother, brother, and wife—it seems far from

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unnatural that an artistic soul might be drawn to speculate about entombment and life after death, to envision an ancestral house crumbling to pieces, or to imagine blood and plague spreading over the countryside.

Mr. Silverman makes careful and accurate connections between even the most grotesque and outlandish of Poe's fictions and the facts of his life. (The richness of these connections has traditionally made Poe a favorite feast for the Freudians; Marie Bonaparte's two-volume study, *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, is a landmark psychoanalytical work.) In Mr. Silverman's formulation, "the continuing popular appeal of Poe's works is owing to their power to confirm once-real beliefs from which most people have never entirely freed themselves, and which his own past kept particularly alive in him: that one can be devoured and annihilated, that the darkness is astir, that the dead in some form survive and return."

The obituaries written after Poe's death were some of the most damning ever published of any major author. His literary executor, Rufus Wilmot Griswold, a literary rival with whom Poe had shared a complex friend-foe relationship, declared in the New York *Daily Tribune*: "Edgar Allan Poe is dead. . . . This announcement will startle many, *but few will be grieved by it*" [italics in original]. Griswold's obituary and his subsequently published *Memoir* began a tradition of Poe-bashing that was eagerly followed and studiously maintained. A Reverend George Gilfillan wrote four years after Poe's death that he "was probably *the* most wicked and worthless of all his fraternity. . . . His heart was as rotten as his conduct was infamous. . . . He had absolutely no virtue or good quality, unless you call remorse a virtue, and despair a grace."

What was it about Poe's character that made people hate him so? Could a hardworking journalist who earnestly strove to support his family amid illness and desperate poverty really be so reprehensible? True, he was downright vicious in his various criticisms of Longfellow, Washington Irving, and other literary contemporaries; true, under the pressure of constant deadlines, he published plenty of bad writing, including, most famously, "The Raven," the poem for which he is best known. (It is a work, Mr. Silverman comments drolly, "fatally destined to be Beloved, a poem for people who don't like poetry.") But are these reasons enough to denounce a writer as wicked, rotten, worthless, and worse?

Mr. Silverman makes it clear that Poe was indeed an unpleasant, even an obnoxious person, a bully, a pest, a shameless self-promoter, and frequently a liar. He could also, however, be thoroughly compassionate, polite, gentle, and appreciative. Though he often went out of his way to insult and provoke, an acquaintance once wrote of him that "no man living loved the praises of others better than he did. . . . Whenever I happened to communicate to him anything touching his abilities as a writer, his bosom would heave like a troubled sea."

In fact, Poe's contradictory behavior, as Mr. Silverman shows, is typical of adults who were orphaned early in childhood: one minute he was at war with countless adversaries, imagined or real, to prove his legitimacy in the world; the next minute he was piteously grateful for a morsel of recognition or praise.

Another important item in understanding Poe's character is the much-discussed question of his addiction to drink. Rather than being considered an illness, his alcoholism has been traditionally viewed as a ridiculous moral failing that he could easily have conquered with a little self-control. But Poe could not control it; as Mr. Silverman writes, "After one drink he could not stop. . . . However much Poe drank it was more than he could manage"; and after his binges he was often bedridden or even, on several occasions, found wandering in an amnesiac stupor. Though his enemies saw in these "lapses" an opportunity for mockery and Poe himself tried to laugh them off, Mr. Silverman makes it painfully clear that his behavior originated in illness and had nothing to do with virtue or self-control: like Sissy's tuberculosis, it was simply another cruel handicap in a calamity-filled life.

"I fled in vain." Poe could not outrun his troubles during his lifetime, and he was certainly not rewarded with sainthood after his death. But he continues to live in the public imagination in the same way as the corpses in his stories refuse to remain buried. The power of his literary gifts has seldom been questioned: at his best he was perhaps the most psychologically powerful storyteller in American history, as well as a memorable poet, a formidable critic, and the inventor of an entirely new genre—mystery or detective fiction.

Yet the quality of Poe's character has been tarnished beyond recognition by exaggerations, falsehoods, and unfair judgments. Kenneth Silverman has performed a service in helping to restore

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Poe's image to something resembling its original likeness. His biographical style is straightforward and resolutely unromantic; but what seems at first a rather bloodless narrative technique is actually a tactful means of expressing profound sympathy. Poe's story, as Mr. Silverman tells it, is an achingly human one, full of contradictions and mired in quotidian details. While Poe's imagination teemed with fantasies of escape, adventure, tricks of nature, and the outfoxing of destiny, he himself fled in vain from an eternally disappointing past toward an anxious future. Mr. Silverman connects the worlds of Poe's imagination and reality with graceful sensitivity, creating a life truly in the round.

The Irish Question

TROLLOPE: A BIOGRAPHY. *By N. John Hall. Oxford University Press. $35.*

Reviewed by C. A. LATIMER

In Anthony Trollope's novel *Doctor Thorne*, N. John Hall tells us, there is a proposal of marriage with the words "Here I am, you can take me or leave me." This could well be the caption to plate 6 in his biography *Trollope*, a *carte de visite* photograph of the subject, aged about forty. This picture repays study. Trollope stands there in his crumpled best, white top hat in hand, against a poorly painted background of column and urn. Already importantly bald, defended by not so much a beard as a zariba of wiry whiskers, he gazes at us with bleak distaste through small minatory spectacles. His checked trousers are too long, and his tussore coat is buttoned only as far down as the breastbone in the strange fashion that seems to have been intended to emphasize the stomach. He hated being photographed, and we can surmise that he wouldn't have been there except that his wife had told him he must. It is the portrait of a Pessimist. N. John Hall is a professor—indeed a Distinguished Professor—but do not be discouraged. His biography comes free of all unsightly turgidity, obfuscation, and academic additives. It is handsomely produced in the Oxford University Press tradition, with the title stamped on the spine in gold lettering—horizontally, so that you don't have to turn your head sideways to read it on the shelf.

Professor Hall enjoys an established reputation as the exemplary editor of the definitive collection of all of Trollope's known letters, and his list of acknowledgments covered three pages on that occasion. For *Trollope* the list is not quite so formidable, but he nevertheless offers grateful thanks to 103 people who have assisted or supported him, together with several organizations and libraries to which he extends his gratitude. We are here in the presence of the gleaming, humming Apparatus of American scholarship in all its majesty. Still more reassuring is it to read the opening words, "Anthony Trollope was born on 24 April 1815 at 16 Keppel Street, Russell Square, London." That's how a biography should start. Hall is wholly in command of his material, and he writes with an easy self-confidence that is only slightly marred by too great a devotion to the semicolon.

As Professor Hall well knows, Trollope is a more elusive fellow than he might appear, and Hall refers to the mysteriousness that was apparent to his contemporaries, to which we should add the difficulties today of fully understanding the Victorians and their preoccupations. He has chosen a close-coupled method of dealing with his man, by which I mean that he sticks very close to Trollope, practically sharing his desk, knitting quotations from letters, books, and criticism with his own commentary in so enmeshed a manner that readers may well find themselves chasing back to locate the quotation mark to know whose words they are reading. Yet this method works well in that we, too, grow close to Trollope and his immediate concerns. One would have to be, admittedly, a most ardent Trollopophile to relish the interminable negotiations and money wrangles with editors and publishers, all of which Hall faithfully records. We should not cavil; these matters were of the greatest importance to Trollope, and it's his life we are reading.

Hall moves in this tangled world with aplomb—he might almost be the reincarnation of a Victorian editor himself. This is definitely a "life," and not a "life and times." There is, for example, no mention whatever of Robert Peel, the leading politician of Trollope's youth, until 1850, in spite of his keen interest in public affairs and his great dislike of Peel.

Odder still is Hall's treatment, or lack of treatment, of Trollope's Irish experience. Af-

✪ C. A. LATIMER is a yacht broker in Suffolk, England.

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ter all, he lived there for sixteen years, and, behind his facade of noisy vehemence, he was an extremely observant and impressionable man. The Irish and their endless troubles enlisted his quick sympathy and affections. It is difficult for us, now, to imagine what life was like in the Ireland of the 1840s, but we can get some idea from the travel notes of Thackeray and Carlyle—it was, quite apart from the famine years, pretty dreadful. Trollope's most percipient contemporary critic, R. H. Hutton of the *Spectator*, described by Hall as "the ever-clever, the critic he most respected," wrote in his review of the Irish novel *An Eye for an Eye*, "there is something in the atmosphere of Ireland which appears to rouse his imagination" and welcomed "this flashing up of Trollope's higher power of imagination, which has lately but too frequently lost itself in sands and marshes and all kinds of muddy fen country." (And indeed was shortly to lose itself again in the jejune *Cousin Henry* of 1879.) A later and undervalued critic, Hugh Walpole, wrote in his *Anthony Trollope* (1928) of the first novel, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, that "never again" was he "so immediately and impressively to invite comparison with the great tragedies of English fiction," and he referred to the book's "poetic tragic realisation of life." Now Hall is no speculator, and he states that his is not a thesis biography, and this is good news, but it is tiresome that he does not engage with what was obviously a powerful influence in Trollope's life. He will go so far as to say that the Macdermots "renders private lives emblematic of a whole society" and agrees with its tragic quality, but will say no more, and this is meager fare in a five-hundred-page biography. This coat having been trailed, its pockets should be turned out, and I propose that at the heart of the Macdermots lies an allegory that helps to explain its undoubted power, sprawling and unkempt though the book is. The allegory in itself is not surprising—early Victorians were fond of symbols—but it tells us something about Trollope's divided feelings as an English official in Ireland. The Macdermots illustrates the crushing of the old Milesian aristocracy by a conquering race, the final extinction, after a long struggle, of a decayed order.

This destruction is enacted in the lives of Euphemia Macdermot and her brother Thadeus, and of Captain Myles Ussher, her seducer. Euphemia—Feemy—is the only daughter of the fainéant Larry Macdermot of ancient family, once princes of Coolavin and rulers of that part

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of northeast Connacht where the action is set. Thady struggles with the dwindled and heavily mortgaged estate that remains to his father. Feemy is a flawed and tragic figure, Kathleen ni Houlihan seen through Saxon eyes, stripped of glamour and mystery, but not of her poignant vulnerability. "She walked as if all the blood of the old Irish princes was in her veins" (like Yeats's later Kathleen—"I met a young woman and she had the walk of a queen"). Her destroyer is the embodiment of the elements that had made up the domination of Ireland through the centuries. Consider him: a sub-inspector of revenue police with the courtesy rank of captain, a fine figure on a horse in the king's uniform, the bastard son of a Protestant County Antrim landowner and, in case he has not made himself absolutely clear, Trollope cheekily gives him a most distinguished name in Church of Ireland history—the church that had played so large a part in the humiliation of the likes of the Catholic Macdermots. He represents Ascendancy power as perceived in the Ireland of 1833, while his bastardy symbolizes the illegitimacy of a hegemony based on land confiscation and discriminatory laws. In the days of Macdermot power, Ussher would have been daggered and left on a dunghill, but Feemy, who has more in common with Hardy's Tess than with nice girls like Lily Dale, can no longer be protected from such predators, and nor can Ireland. To me, an English Protestant, it seems plain enough.

Trollope couldn't go on writing about Ireland. He needed money and then, as now, the English were bored to sobs by the Irish Question. There is something touching in the way, old and ailing at the end of his life, Trollope struggled back twice to the ill-fated country, roused by the Phoenix Park murders, to gather material for his last broken-backed novel, *The Landleaguers*. Perhaps he hoped to recover his "higher power."

Hall has allowed Trollope to reveal himself, so far as he was prepared to do so, rather than contribute to the revelation himself. This was obviously a deliberate decision, but it rules out any Chestertonian flashes of insight.

After finishing the book, I studied the pictures again through a magnifying glass. In plate 27 Trollope is an old man, and he still doesn't like being photographed. The zariba has developed—a warning to biographers—into a forest as thick and impenetrable as the one that surrounded Sleeping Beauty's castle. So, Mr. Trollope, did you sell your artistic birthright for a mess of publishers' checks? It's no good accusing you of not being Mr. Hardy; what you did well, you did consummately well. But wasn't there a hint, right at the beginning, of something more, a reaching for the "poetic tragic realisation of life"? Never mind; we love you, and isn't that what you wanted most of all?

Literary Shrinkage

THE VANISHING SUBJECT: EARLY PSYCHOLOGY AND LITERARY MODERNISM. *By Judith Ryan. University of Chicago Press. $29.95.*

Reviewed by LINDA SIMON

In the late nineteenth century, the search for self was, of course, nothing new. Psychology, however, as a discipline separate from philosophy was decidedly new, and its inventors lit out into unexpected terrain in their effort to comprehend the mind. Psychologists were as likely to conduct their researches at séances as they were in laboratories, as likely to publish their findings in the *Nation* as they were in the *Revue scientifique*.

Early psychology drew upon a protean body of ideas about the genesis and structure of personality, the site of the authentic self, the causes and treatment of neurosis, and the relationship of the self to the objective world. Judith Ryan, professor of German and Comparative Literature at Harvard, is interested in one particularly fertile branch of the new psychology: critical empiricism, whose advocates, Ryan tells us, believed "that the only admissible evidence for the existence of something was that of our senses; the only reality was that of our consciousness."

Of the many philosophers and psychologists allied with empiricism, Ryan concentrates on three whose works she sees as seminal for European and American writers: William James, a physician by training and a philosopher by disposition—but not yet by profession—had published his massive *Principles of Psychology* in 1890. His Austrian colleague Ernst Mach, a physicist and mathematician, published his

LINDA SIMON, director of the Writing Center at Harvard University, is the author of several books, most recent among them, *Good Writing*. She is currently working on a biography of William James.

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Contribution to the Analysis of the Sensations in 1896; and Franz Brentano, a philosopher and theologian, helped to establish the field with his *Psychology from an Empiricist Point of View* in 1874.

Basing their work on introspection rather than experimentation, critical empiricists were concerned with one's apprehension of the objective world. How, they asked, do we know what we see? And, even more important, how do our perceptions of objects relate to our definition of self?

At the same time as James, Mach, and Brentano were questioning perception and identity, writers as apparently different as Gertrude Stein and Kafka, Henry James and James Joyce were asking similar questions: how do we represent what we see? "If we 'know' a table to be rectangular, but see it as trapezoid," they asked, "shouldn't literature really represent it the way we see it?" And when we move beyond simple objects to notions like time, color, and physical and emotional responses, how, then, do writers represent reality?

For poets and novelists, critical empiricism offered some liberation from the strictures of representational art and from the confines of their own identity. "The ego," claimed Ernst Mach, "is not a definite, unalterable, sharply bounded unity," but rather a collation of impressions. Critical empiricism allowed writers to derive their authority from idiosyncrasy, to celebrate, rather than obfuscate, their sense of alienation from much of their culture.

In illuminating the correspondences between modernist literature and critical empiricism, Ryan makes two crucial assumptions: first, writers saw the new psychologies as filling literary needs; second, the new psychologies evoked a "sense of dissolution and fragmentation" that these writers brought to their work. While Ryan herself admits that she is not positing a theory about modernist literature as a whole, she does present this literature as a "critical reflex" of early psychology, rather than as a parallel response to many complex personal and cultural forces.

Ryan argues her "critical reflex" theory most successfully when she examines the work of writers who considered theoretical issues in their non-fiction prose. Looking at Robert Musil, for example, whose doctoral thesis evaluated Ernst Mach's theories, Ryan is convincing when she suggests that Musil brought questions about duality of vision and the

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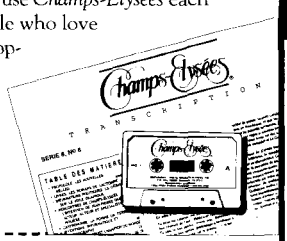

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unconscious to his fiction. With Walter Pater and Joris-Karl Huysmans, Ryan makes strong connections between the concerns with subjectivity and perception they expressed in their writings on aesthetics and in their fiction.

But with such writers as Proust and Woolf, the correspondence between psychology and literature is less persuasive. If we know, for example, that Proust (along with many of his contemporaries) read Bergson, can we conclude that since "Proust's novel sequence has an empiricist aspect not attributable to his study of impressionism, it doubtless originates to some degree in Bergson"? Only if we assume that Proust was questing for a theoretical construction to translate into fiction.

Ryan is most incisive when she helps us to see how early psychologists and literary modernists struggled with the same feelings of philosophical restlessness and anxiety as they sought to impose coherence on their perceptions and on the narratives of their lives and works. If reality, as they were inclined to notice, was becoming increasingly fragmented, perhaps the fragmentation had a logic of its own. After all, as Gertrude Stein wrote, composition is, in itself, explanation.

Stein, of course, is a likely suspect for inclusion in a study of modernism, especially one emphasizing the rendering of reality. An admiring student of James, Stein saw that his idea of a continuous present and his theories about sense perception helped her to wrest everyday objects from their historical and cultural connotations. Like some other critics, Ryan believes that Stein may have introduced James's *Principles of Psychology* to Picasso, affecting the course of cubism in painting as well as in literature.

But understanding Stein's works is a complicated business. The strictures that Ryan gave herself for this study do not allow her to examine some salient material. She skips over the experiments in automatic writing that Stein conducted in James's psychology laboratory under Hugo Münsterberg, for example, experiments that reflected many psychologists' growing interest in layered consciousness and the idea that the authentic self might not be the self that one presented to the world. Similarly, Ryan does not consider Stein's—and James's—interest in memory, a critical component in understanding identity. In fact, she does not refer to Stein's important essay "What Are Master-Pieces And Why Are There So Few Of Them," which directly confronts the subject of subjectivity. Nor does she consider Stein's anguish over her own identity, which fueled her passionate inquiries into the "bottom nature," as Stein put it, of herself and her friends.

The problems that Stein presents for Ryan come up with other writers, too. In her excellent introductory chapter, Ryan sketches the complicated cultural and historical context from which critical empiricism emerged, but when she examines the works of fifteen important modernists—a mighty challenge in so slim a book—these complications necessarily fall aside, and we are asked to consider these writers primarily as solvers of literary problems.

Looking at Alice James, Ryan tends to emphasize Alice's interest in consciousness over her desire to alleviate a sense of abiding loneliness through keeping a diary. Her diary, as Ryan notes, is far different in tone from the letters she wrote at the same time. But those letters were public documents, often read aloud and circulated among family members. The diary was private; only her companion Katharine Loring knew that she kept it, and therefore it liberated her from social conventions. Readers, then, need to decide whether Alice was exploring the "problem" of consciousness, or whether she was documenting a self that could not be revealed safely anywhere else; whether, influenced by William's writing, she saw her nervous breakdowns "as a series of attempts to escape the oppression of consciousness and its terrifying mass of sensations," or whether she saw her breakdowns as a response to social and familiar oppression.

Perhaps a longer work, or one limited to fewer writers, might have given Ryan the room to consider her subjects in a wider context. Although she modestly confesses that her study illuminates only "one impulse in the genesis" of literary modernism, that impulse resonates so forcefully that it deserves a wider field. As Ryan admits, many more works need to be juxtaposed: the scientific writings, for example, that posited the notion of a fourth dimension, of the dissolution of the atom, of radioactivity and relativity; the writings of other new psychologists that examined multiple personality, memory, and dreams; and the autobiographical works of writers and artists that

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may help us to understand personal struggles and motivations. Without the complications of these works, literary modernism appears to be merely an expression of ideology; and that, as Ryan knows, is only part of the story.

The Fourth Reich?

THE "NAZI MENACE" IN ARGENTINA, 1931–47. *By Ronald C. Newton. Stanford University Press. $49.50.*

Reviewed by MARK FALCOFF

The recent decision of President Carlos Menem to open Argentina's archives to researchers interested in his country's association with Nazi fugitives has suddenly revived old and painful memories. For Americans (and others) who lived through World War II, Argentina more often than not is remembered principally as the weak link in the Western Hemisphere alliance against the Axis, a country ruled during the 1930s and 1940s by a reactionary and pro-German civil and military elite. In its more garish versions, this image includes the notion that Argentina served as a key center of Axis espionage and communications during the early years of the war and that local Germans (together with their Argentine friends) even conspired to overthrow the existing government and replace it with one openly loyal to Berlin.

In some ways this impression is entirely understandable. Unlike other Latin American countries, Argentina loftily declared its neutrality in 1941 and stuck to that position until it was forced by heavy American pressure to break relations with the Axis in early 1944. It possessed the largest and most prosperous German expatriate community in all Latin America. Just as Hitler's regime was cracking under Allied pressure in 1944–45, Argentina passed under the control of the Perón regime, which in some ways was consciously modeled on the Fascist regimes in pre-war Europe. Finally, it is indisputably true that many former Nazis, as well as collaborators with German occupiers in Croatia, the Ukraine, and elsewhere ended up in Argentina.

✪ MARK FALCOFF is resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. His books include *Prologue to Perón: Argentina in Depression and War, 1930–43.*

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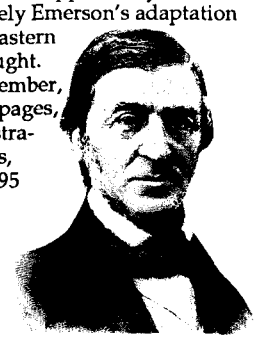

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The argument of this book, by a distinguished American historian who teaches at Simon Fraser University in Canada, is that all of these things do not add up to a "Nazi menace" in Argentina and that much of U.S. policy toward that country, particularly during the crucial years of 1944 and 1945, was based on ignorance, willful misunderstanding, and manipulation by the intelligence services of a third country. Indisputably, there were Nazi agents in Argentina; some of these even distributed lavish bribes intended to assure continued Argentine neutrality. Before 1944, Buenos Aires was in fact the Third Reich's "intelligence and covert-warfare platform in the Western hemisphere." Nonetheless, there never was a plot to take over the country, or even seriously to project German power within it; in fact, Berlin's efforts, he writes, were characterized by

> the inability of [German] foreign policy makers to define Germany's goals in the Western hemisphere; by bureaucratic territoriality, lack of coordination, Nazi indiscipline . . . and arrogance vis-à-vis foreigners; and great expenditures of energy and money for little gain.

Indeed, after 1941, when Hitler's armies turned eastward toward the Soviet Union, the only possible geopolitical interest that Argentina might have held for the Germans—its unlimited capacity to produce foodstuffs—was lost. By the time that Hitler's armies were in full retreat from Russia in the winter of 1944, Berlin's resources, both financial and naval, had lost whatever reach they once possessed in the Southern Hemisphere. By that time the Argentine government had recognized the problem of German subversion within the country and effectively taken action against it. Yet it was precisely at this moment that relations between Washington and Buenos Aires—which had been problematic throughout the war—suddenly took a turn for the worst. But why?

In order to answer that question, Newton has produced a narrative that is astounding in its richness and complexity—based on some remarkable archival materials from the United States, Germany, Britain, and Argentina, many of them declassified for the first time. (Newton is, as far as I know, the first foreign scholar ever allowed to work in the Argentine Foreign Ministry archives.) Building on fifteen or twenty years of patient, unremitting research, he presents his findings both chronologically and thematically—moving back and forth between German diplomatic and immigration history and Argentine political and economic history; between U.S. diplomatic history and British intelligence history. In the process, his book manages to be a significant contribution to all of these fields, as well as to the history of World War II generally. It almost audibly groans under the weight of all the work that went into it, yet it still manages to crackle like a good spy tale—all the more compelling for being true.

Before 1939 the most important foreign power in Argentina was not Germany but Great Britain, which had developed most of the infrastructure of its booming agro-export and pastoral economy and still represented its principal overseas market. But from the 1920s on, antiquated British industry found itself increasingly incapable of meeting the increasing demands of Argentina's growing urban, middle-class consumer economy; both Germany and the United States entered the competition to supplant it. The rivalry for second place was not merely an economic war but also, Newton writes, an "ideological and political struggle" for

> the allegiance of Argentina's entrepreneurial, technical, and professional middle classes—those middle classes that would dominate the succeeding stage . . . of Argentine capitalist development.

This economic war thus established the conditions of a hostile U.S.–German relationship on Argentine soil even before Nazism came to power. In the event, neither country was able to cancel the other out: the United States could not sell manufactured goods to the Argentines because farm lobbies in Washington succeeded in preventing Argentine beef from entering the U.S. market. Inhibited from earning dollars, the Argentines were rendered incapable of making purchases in the United States. Meanwhile, much of the ground that the Germans were beginning to gain in the 1920s, and again in the mid-1930s, was likewise forestalled by Hitler's decision to convert much of German industry to armaments rather than to consumer goods. (No one foresaw the outcome, which was a rather curious draw—no one country replaced Great Britain, and the Argentines were forced to divide their foreign commerce after the war among

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a dozen or so small and middle-sized countries as well as the Soviet Union.)

Up to 1939 the British preferred to cede second place to the Germans rather than the Americans, since they recognized the superior potential of American industry over the longer term. However, in the first two years of their war with Nazi Germany, the most important element of British survival was arms, ships, and foodstuffs from the neutral United States—for which purpose British intelligence purposely inflated the nature of the Nazi threat in its immediate area—that is, the Western Hemisphere.

This inflation took the form of "white," "black," and "gray"—propaganda hoaxes, disinformation, forgeries, and dirty tricks, including a phony "Nazi map" of South America that was produced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the Navy Day dinner in October 1941—a document that assigned particular importance to a greatly enlarged Argentina. Once in the war, Washington needed little encouragement from these counter-intelligence operations; it grandly accused Buenos Aires of willfully harboring German spies. These, it claimed, were the crucial sources of information that made it possible for U-boats to cause allied shipping to have serious losses. This was, in fact, quite untrue: as early as mid-1942, the German navy had decided its lines were dangerously extended and had forbidden further attacks on Allied convoys south of latitude thirty degrees—a fact of which the British were well aware, because they had cracked the Enigma cipher (information it did not deign to pass on to its allies in Washington). By that time Britain was free of immediate concern for its survival, and its policy in Argentina could resume its prewar configuration—that of preventing the United States from replacing it as the country's principal economic partner. Within that context, anything that rendered U.S. relations with Argentina more contentious and difficult was all to the good.

Argentina had been famously (and profitably) neutral during World War I, and the decision of its government to resume that stance in 1939 was broadly supported by public opinion. (Neutrality was also—quietly but firmly—the policy of choice for the British, since it assured safe passage for Argentine merchant shipping, much of which was laden with precious foodstuffs and war materiels.) The point is worth stressing, because support for neutrality was not necessarily linked to ideological sympathy for Nazism, which in any event was

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surprisingly slight—even in military circles. The local German community in Argentina was somewhat divided before the war between old-line conservatives of the pre–1914 type and eager-beaver sympathizers with the New Order. But as Newton shows, there was little or no coordination between the German embassy in Buenos Aires and the various Nazi party overseas organizations that tended to expend most of their energies on internecine rivalries.

Moreover, although right-wing Argentine nationalists broadly sympathized with Hitler's "crusade" in Eastern Europe (as they had even more with General Franco's in Spain), these feelings were inspired almost exclusively by Nazism's ostensibly anti-Communist content. As Newton shows, there was no real ideological fit between National Socialism and "criollo" fascism or would-be fascism; the former was inclusive and also (though anti-modern in many ways) able to "absorb such fundamentals of modernity as secularism, egalitarianism, and the technological imperative." The latter, on the other hand, was of the Sword-and-Cross variety—that is, exclusive, elitist, and backward-looking in every respect. ("Its answer to the twentieth century was to ignore it.")

Some American diplomats—most notably Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, who had served in the U.S. embassy in Buenos Aires during the First World War—grasped these subtleties and refused to make the matter of Argentine neutrality an issue. But he was outflanked (and outranked) by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, for whom Argentina's supposedly "disloyal" traffic with the Axis became something of an idée fixe. Welles's resignation in the wake of a sexual scandal in September 1943 (a point to which, surprisingly, Newton does not make reference) removed the only important obstacle within the Department of State to a policy of confrontation with Argentina.

A diplomatic incident in early 1944—the capture of an unofficial Argentine diplomatic courier on his way to Berlin carrying compromising documents—allowed Washington to embarrass the government in Buenos Aires into breaking relations with the Axis and, subsequently, to declaring war upon Germany and Japan. Nonetheless, the emergence at the same time of Colonel Juan Perón and a new political movement that superficially resembled Italian fascism (but differed from it in many crucial, indeed fundamental ways) allowed Washington to sustain for some time after the war what Newton calls "The Myth of the Fourth Reich," namely the notion

> that German Argentina [represented] a self-renewing reservoir of resentment and anti-democratic attitudes, [which] had become the redoubt to which the political, military and industrial leaders, the technicians and mad scientists of the disintegrating Third Reich were being evacuated, there to continue to menace the stability and progress of the American republics.

Before these delusions could get us into more serious trouble, American foreign policy was forced radically to shift gears in 1947 and 1948. Newly discovered Cold War priorities suddenly transformed Argentina—now led by an anti-Communist military man with broad and deep popular support—into an object of assiduous courtship by Washington. As for war criminals who took refuge there, Newton reminds us that Argentina was by no means unique. By the early 1950s, "one-time Nazis were administering banks and industries in the British zone; Klaus Barbie was safely in Bolivia; and former Gestapo men were plying their trade for the East Germans." While Argentina had nothing to be proud of in this respect, he concludes, "there is more than sufficient opprobrium to go around."

Newton's narrative, which disentangles and relates all of these controversies with remarkable lucidity, is also informed by a kind of suppressed (though sometimes not very well suppressed) anger and disgust at what might be called the American Way of Foreign Policy. He repeats more than once that as a political culture we have a penchant for "worse case scenarios"; the tendency to inflate Argentina into something it was not and never could have been is merely an earlier example of our national weakness for hyperbole, exaggeration, and ignorance of the world outside our own boundaries that has found expression lately (he says) in such adventures as the Contra war in Nicaragua, the invasion of Panama, or Operation Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf. On the evidence of this particular account, he is certainly right. Yet even the most appreciative reader must be allowed to register a couple of caveats.

In the first place, Newton has read all the archives and knows how the story came out in the end. People who lived through the period viewed matters from a far less privileged vantage point, and many of them (not unnaturally)

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took a far less calm view of Hitler's global ambitions. In this, of course, they were helped along (as Newton shows) by journalists, adventurers, opportunists, and others who had a vested interest—political, ideological, or economic—in blowing the Nazi threat in Argentina far beyond its actual proportions. (One might also mention the Soviet Union, which, as Hull's own memoirs make clear, was one of the firmest and most rigid purveyors of the Myth of the Argentine Fourth Reich.)

In the second place, although Newton places the German question (and later the Nazi threat) within the context of Argentine domestic politics with some success, he misses an important point. If American diplomats, journalists, visitors, and others tended to confuse Argentine neutrality with Axis sympathies or active collaboration, they had their reasons. Between 1939 and 1943 Argentina was rent by a struggle between advocates of democracy and some sort of "authoritarian" solution. To some extent this conflict crossed party lines, placing pro-British conservatives, liberals, socialists, and communists all on the same side (if for different reasons). Inevitably, there was an overlap between these groups and pro-Allied opinion generally; many of the most outstanding liberal politicians in Argentina were (not surprisingly) conspicuously anti-Nazi. The search for German operatives became part of a larger crusade to discredit anti-democratic elements within the government, church, army, and educational institutions. Rhetoric became overheated, accusations flew hot and fast, and the anti-Nazi hysteria took on a life of its own.

Naturally, the Argentines of the democratic center, left, and right did not represent their struggle as domestic political ploy; they saw it as part of the larger world struggle in which the United States was a common ally. And let us remember that while their opponents were not—as Cordell Hull and others insisted—Nazis or German operatives, neither were they particularly sympathetic to Allied war goals or, for that matter, to the most minimal standards of public decency in their own country.

The point is worth emphasizing because in this wholly admirable book the author sometimes skids very close to the edge—that is, of suggesting that whatever position the United States favors in world affairs (anti-Nazism in World War II, anti-communism in the Cold War) is everywhere and always wrongheaded and unjustified. In most ways, nonetheless, he performs the historian's task with judgment, discrimination, and uncommon skill. At the very least, never again will we be able to view the history of World War II or the struggle for power in Argentina in quite the same way.

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O Pioneer!

KURT WOLFF: A PORTRAIT IN ESSAYS AND LETTERS. *Edited by Michael Ermarth. Translated by Deborah Lucas Schneider. University of Chicago Press. $24.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM B. GOODMAN

The rarest of books: one by and about a publisher that makes a genuine contribution to literary culture. Kurt Wolff, born of a mixed marriage in Bonn in 1887 to Leonhard Wolff, an academic and musician, and his wife Maria,

WILLIAM B. GOODMAN, an independent editor/agent, lives in Bedford, Massachusetts.

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née Marx, was hardly a routine German success. He made the distinction early between publishers "who slavishly cater to the public's tastes," an approach that requires "neither enthusiasm nor taste" but simply knowing "what activates the tear glands, or any other glands" and the publisher, "a kind of seismographer," who notes "what the times bring forth" and tries "to win readers for works which appear . . . to be original, of literary merit, and important for the future, no matter whether they are easily understood or not." This is a familiar enough distinction today perhaps, but it takes everything—trained taste, firm standards, wide reading in as many literatures as possible, unslakable appetite for the permanent and the new, commercial courage—to make it the actuating principle of a publisher and his house.

On the night Wolff was born, his father, Marburg's music director, was conducting a performance of the *Messiah*. Wolff's childhood in Bonn was secure and happy. He received his "first impression of great music" there. "It was where my mother's family had lived for generations. . . . The most profound impression of beauty was made by the chamber music played at home, and I became familiar with the entire literature from Bach to Brahms." After study at the Königliches Gymnasium, he attended the universities of Bonn, Munich, Marburg, and Leipzig. In 1905, at Marburg, he was on "friendly terms" with a number of professors, "not because I was a brilliant student (I certainly wasn't) but because I always took my cello along when I went to call on them, and in those days I was the only decent amateur cellist in Marburg." But, music, however necessary, was not his métier. He was, despite forays elsewhere, drawn more and more to books, writers, and literary men. While doing his military service in 1907, he met people in the circle around the poet Stefan George. His appetite for books was such that his collection, begun during "school days," had reached "about 12,000 volumes" by the summer of 1912. In December 1908, he notes in his diary: "Have begun sending proofs of the Merck edition to Insel Verlag." In June 1909: "Signed contract with Insel Verlag for Adele Schopenhauer's diaries." In 1910: "Have written a small essay on the editions of *Werther*," a sign of his lifelong passion for Goethe. Within these predelictions, and their early results, lies not a writer so much as someone so deeply drawn to writers and their problems, someone so bewitched by the very idea and presence of books that his next step seems inevitable.

Kurt Wolff entered publishing in 1908 in a brief partnership with Ernst Rowolt in Leipzig, after which, in 1913, he formed Kurt Wolff Verlag in the same city. His was the modernist generation disaffiliating itself from the stale certainties of Wilhelmine society. His house, and the satellites that revolved around it, none of them large, personified this perspective. He was soon the publisher, all in 1913, of Max Brod, Franz Kafka, Franz Werfel, Walter Hasenclever, Georg Trakl, Robert Walser, and Georg Heym. In 1914 came a special edition of Karl Kraus's *The Great Wall of China*, with lithographs by Oskar Kokoschka; in 1915 came Gustav Meyrink's *The Golem*, which sold "hundreds of thousands of copies." Obviously something had happened. It was more than luck, hunch, or accident, as Wolff deprecatingly suggests in "On Publishing in General," included in this book. He and his confreres, especially Hasenclever, Kurt Pinthus, and Werfel (whom Wolff had rescued from his father's glove factory in Prague by giving him a reader's job), had more than passively sensed the profound change in temperament and sensibility that had begun to move in the arts. They felt its dawning power and were determined to represent it. Against the sober background of the older German houses, Kurt Wolff Verlag stood out like a new world. It fairly glittered in, for example, its *Der Jüngste Tag* [The Last Judgment], subtitled *New Writing*, which their 1910–13 catalogue noted was "intended to be more than a book and less than a series." These books, which appeared at "irregular intervals" and at low list prices—80 pfennigs in paper, 1.50 marks in cloth—became emblems of "the shared experience of our time." It was one of those rare situations in which readers turned to particular books to discover, confirm, and deepen what they felt.

Such writing promised much during the teen years of this century, even before Europe slid into its Great War and more perhaps during it. Wolff was called up—his business kept going by Georg Heinrich Meyer—and he served in Belgium, Russia, and the Balkans until Sep-

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tember 1916 when, on the order of the Grand Duke of Hesse, he was given indefinite leave and so was able to resume his publishing life. Between his return and the postwar collapse of the German economy in the ghastly inflation of the 1920s—"A KWV novel now [1923] priced at 5 million marks"—the Weimar Republic had come to its complex life. In September 1919, there is this lovely touch: "Played trio with Klee." And there is the florescence of his house with books, among others, by Gottfried Benn, Kafka, Kraus, Arnold Zweig, Voltaire, Heinrich Mann, Fritz von Unruh, Karel Capek, Iwan Goll, Zola, Franz Masereel, Werfel, Rabindranath Tagore, Ernst Toller, Carl Zuckmayer, Erwin Panofsky, Joseph Roth, Adolfo Venturi, some of them illustrated by Paul Klee, George Grosz, E. L. Kirchner, and Kokoschka.

He shut his doors in 1930 not from failure but because a wildly inflated currency destroyed the terms of trade and the value of his inventory. "There was no cash. . . . New production did not even bring a return on our investment." In a characteristic gesture as the inflation roared, he spent a great deal on advertising because he "felt it was preferable to spend what money we had rather than save it. Authors were delighted."

"Why did I stop? There was nothing new in sight. No sign of anything new." These are sentences to ponder. Wolff's sense of the new, his extraordinary feel for the culture in which he worked must have signaled that the great days of Weimar modernism, of which his house had become the beacon, were closing. While he had mixed feelings about being called primarily "the publisher of the Expressionists," he knew what was happening to artistic morale as the disorienting drain of the wrecked economy continued, democratic politics were undermined, and the Nazis took hold. After two years abroad, in the winter of 1932, he was in Berlin briefly to scout the chances of a post as director of a radio station. Diary entry, February 10, 1933: "Speech by Hitler." During the night seventeen days later, the Reichstag burned down. Diary entry for the 28th: "Packing until 1:30 AM." Wolff left Germany on the night of March 1–2. When Hitler's Brown Shirts set great bonfires of books, Kurt Wolff Verlag volumes often fed the flames. He married Helen, née Mosel, in London later that March, and they began the itinerant life of refugees. Their son Christian was born in Nice in March 1934. Soon after, they moved to a town near Florence, but by 1938 their Italian refuge was undercut by the increasing rapport of Mussolini and Hitler. In August 1938, Wolff is back in Nice. His passport has expired. The Germans refuse to renew it, which makes a return home to Italy impossible. On November 10 his diary records the suicide of the Kraemers, close Jewish friends in Munich who had not emigrated. From mid-November 1939, less than three months after war was declared, until late the following December, when he got the American visa that restored his and his family's chances, the Wolffs endured the routine cruelties of the time, less cruel in retrospect (since he got his family out) than surely it would have been had they been forced to remain. On March 30, 1941, nine months before Pearl Harbor, the Wolffs disembarked in New York in "glorious weather." He had not published a book in nearly a decade. Before the year was out, he'd begun discussions that led to incorporation in 1942 of Pantheon Books, a noble American

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echo and extension of Kurt Wolff Verlag. He was in his "50s, when it is quite difficult to adapt to a foreign country if you are not fluent in the language." He had support, $7,500, from old Munich friends, for which he was required to find other backers to match. Moreover, he was to serve without salary until the new house showed a profit. At the start everything was "done in a single room [on Washington Square] . . . it functions as our living-dining-bedroom and office." Soon Jacques Schiffrin, who'd emigrated from Paris in 1941, joined as a partner. The Bollingen Foundation, founded by Paul and Mary Mellon, asked Pantheon to assume its publications. This meant, for one major example, the many volumes of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*. The first clear Pantheon hit was a complete edition of Grimms' fairy tales illustrated by Josef Scharl. "My American publishing career," Wolff said, "really began when I realized, 'You are in a country where you can be a pioneer.' " At first pioneering meant translation of important earlier work by Stefan George, Charles Péguy, Jacob Burckhardt, Paul Valéry, and Hermann Broch. In the spring of 1944, he could note, "Pantheon was funded on an extremely small amount of initial capital to give me a chance to earn a living. It was an experiment—and since no matter what the balance sheet says on April 30, 1944, a profit is now unavoidable—the experiment is a success." That success was built not only on adroitly chosen books for translation, such as Robert Musil's *Young Törless*, but by such original works as Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and Pantheon's first substantial best-seller, Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *Gift from the Sea* (1955). In 1958 Wolff showed the first signs of heart disease, he published *Dr. Zhivago*, Pasternak won the Nobel Prize, and trouble surfaced among the Pantheon partners. This discord did not suit Wolff's sense of his "beloved profession," and the next year he and his wife moved to Switzerland. In 1960 he published Giuseppi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*. In the following July, he "withdrew entirely from Pantheon." He was seventy-two, old enough by usual standards to retire. Accomplished publishers like accomplished conductors, however, seem not to fade with age, and in late July 1961, responding to a brilliant invention of William Jovanovich, the imprint "Helen and Kurt Wolff Books" was named and associated with Harcourt, Brace & World. I was at Harcourt then and remember the feeling of triumph that swept the house. Among the books that soon followed were Joy Adamson's *Living Free*, Karl Jaspers's *The Great Philosophers*, and Günter Grass's *Cat and Mouse*.

There are letters in this book no one would want to miss, letters to and from Rilke, Kafka, the Manns, Pasternak, and others; but the heart of the book, after four elegantly plainspoken essays on publishing, are essays on five of his writers—Kafka, Werfel, Kraus, Tagore, Lou Andreas-Salomé. All candidly report the history of his connection with each of them. They never exceed what he knows or imitate literary criticism. The claim they make on literary history is unmistakable. His first meeting with Kafka, on June 29, 1912, is a good example. It took place in "the shabby little office [Rowolt and I] had rented from the venerable Drugulin Printing Company." As Kafka "took his leave . . . he said something I have never heard from any other author before or since. . . . 'I will always be much more grateful to you for returning my manuscripts than for publishing them.' " Kafka made no demands on his publisher. Not so Karl Kraus, the Austrian satirist, poet, journalist, and editor of *Die Fackel* (The Torch, 1899–1936), to whom Wolff devotes his most revealing essay. Kraus's work has not traveled well, but to Wolff's generation he was a charismatic figure, an Austrian Mencken in whom gloomy Existentialist glosses of a decaying Europe were mixed with the antics of a demonic clown.

Wolff first met Kraus, at Werfel's urging, in Vienna in 1912, because Werfel was sure that Kraus was not pleased with his current publisher and, therefore, that he was ready to move. Kraus was "the most controversial figure in German literature of his time," and it would be a coup to land him. Kraus had all the temperamental excesses of the prima donna. He had liked the elegant way Wolff had produced *The Chinese Wall* in 1914. It used an earlier Kraus essay of 1910 that Kokoschka had extended with eight lithographs. This book did not make Kraus a Wolff author, but soon there was a contract for an older book, *Culture and the Press*, which had stood in type for seven years because Kraus had reservations about the publisher. In April 1914, however, disapproving of some of Wolff's writers, he asked to be released "since it was apparent I

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had consented not to a favorable contract but a terrible contrast." Wolff immediately canceled the contract and continued to call on Kraus. A game had sprung up between them in which they teased each other.

"When will I finally have the honor of publishing Karl Kraus?" "My dear fellow, you know I can't possibly become the author of a firm that would advertise my books in the same catalogue with those hacks X and Y." The joke was carried on for a time with no serious discussion. But one night in the summer of 1915 on one of my first stopovers [in Vienna] between the Balkans and Germany, an idea occurred to me, and as I was about to go, I varied the routine and said to Kraus: "I am delighted to be your publisher at long last—all I need now is some manuscripts. I can't forgive myself for not seeing how to surmount the one obstacle long ago. . . ." "What in the world do you mean?"—"I mean that tomorrow, as soon as I'm back in Leipzig, I am going to have a new publishing house registered. It will be called 'Verlag der Schriften von Karl Kraus' (Kurt Wolff). The firm will have no other authors. Agreed?" Kraus hesitated for a moment and said "Agreed." "Fine," I said.

The deal was done. Wolff asked for a volume of poetry as soon as possible and promised to reissue all of Kraus's books in or out of print. Their relation lasted until one of Wolff's writers, Werfel of all people, insulted Kraus in a stupid piece that reappeared in a Werfel collection under the Wolff imprint. That did it, and in October 1923 Kraus withdrew, announcing in *Die Fackel* that his books in future would be available from "Verlag *Die Fackel* of Vienna and Leipzig." Wolff blamed himself, never felt Kraus was wrong, and returned all rights he had in Kraus titles to the author. This response was perfectly characteristic of the decency of his practice as a publisher.

In early October 1963, Wolff was in Germany for the Frankfurt Book Fair where he and Günter Grass signed a contract for *Dog Years*. He was on his way to a meeting of the insurgent literary "Gruppe 47" but detoured to Marbach to visit the Schiller National Museum, the German state literary archive. On October 21, he stopped in Lugwigsburg, not far from his destination, to take an afternoon walk during which a truck, backing up, ran him down. He did not last the day. He was buried in Marbach. Every German publisher and many writers came to the funeral. His books remain and are read everywhere.

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The Reader Replies . . . . . .

Alexander Gerschenkron

I was very glad to read Donald McCloskey's essay about my grandfather, Alexander Gerschenkron in the Spring 1992 AMERICAN SCHOLAR. I should like, however, to make a few corrections. It's true that one of the many languages my grandfather spoke and read was French, but he didn't learn it in Austria after fleeing the Bolsheviks with his family. By the time he arrived in Vienna as a teenager, his French was already fluent. It ought to have been; he was raised by a French governess. And contrary to what Professor McCloskey asserts, he did read Hebrew. He was not, however, as Professor McCloskey speculates, Jewish. Brought up in the Russian Orthodox faith, my grandfather was never coy about his religion, only rather private about it. And it's definitely true that he worked as a flanger in a California shipyard after arriving in this country in 1938. "I seriously considered staying in the shipyard," he once said. "I liked the contact with the anonymous mass of Americans. And the work doesn't follow you at night into your leisure and your dreams. Is scholarship pleasure or pain? If someone cuts off your leg you know it's pain, but with scholarship you never know." After teaching at Berkeley and working in the shipyard, he moved on to Washington where he was an economist for the Federal Reserve Board, before heading north when Harvard invited him to teach there. Yes, it's true that one of the many articles he wrote during his career there was a mordant commentary on Nabokov's prose. The second portion of that story is that in *Ada*, Nabokov makes fleeting mention of a loathsome lexicographer named Dr. Gerschizhevsky (Dmitry Cizevsky—or Tschichevsky—had also sufficiently offended the novelist to merit lampooning). When my grandfather learned of this his response was typical: "A small man's revenge," is what he said.

NICHOLAS DAWIDOFF
New York, New York

Homi Bhabha

In his fascinating essay on Homi Bhabha in the Summer 1992 SCHOLAR, George Greenstein tends to underestimate the vitality of the connection between the man he is studying and the country and culture to which he belonged, insisting that Bhabha's outlook was "international not Indian," that he received a "Western education," preferred European to Indian clothes, and had little understanding or knowledge of his countrymen. Given that Greenstein admires Bhabha enormously, but on his own confession experiences a sense of "absolute and fundamental alienness" when confronted with India, his desire to disjoin Bhabha from his Indianness is perhaps understandable. His line of reasoning seems to be that whereas Bhabha's work possessed "internal coherence and formal elegance," India is above all "a nation of chaos." How can one be possibly explained in terms of the other?

Greenstein's reluctance to see India as a crucial factor in the nurturing of Bhabha results in a forfeit: he is "amazed" by contradictions in Bhabha's career and at a loss to account for them. While the honesty of this confession is admirable, and brings out the complexity of Bhabha's character, I cannot help feeling that a greater willingness to see him (Bhabha) as a product of the Indian ethos would have provided an explanation of some of the puzzles that intrigue Greenstein.

Nothing puzzles him more than Bhabha's decision, taken sometime during the war, to remain in India, "a relative backwater" of science, for the rest of his life, rather than seek a scientific career abroad, even though he was "more British than the British" by temperament and had spent thirteen years at Cambridge. But the tradition of the Westernized Indian (almost always a man, though sometimes a woman) who went to study abroad, became perfectly British in the process, and then returned to serve India though the possibility of a brilliant career in Britain beckoned, was a well-recognized and well-established one until Independence.The two Ghose brothers, Manmohan and Aurobindo, exemplified it in the nineteenth century, as did the poet Sarojini Naidu. So, a little later, did Jawaharlal Nehru, whose influence upon younger contemporaries like Bhabha was enormous. Shortly after Bhabha arrived at his decision, another Bombay Parsi, N. K. Rustomji, gave up the chance of becoming a Classical Fellow at Cambridge and a concert violinist and returned to India to join the Civil Service. The tradition was well enough recognized to provide the theme for novels such as B. Rajan's *Too Long in the West*. It was not till the late 1950s and 1960s, for reasons too complex to discuss here, that this tradition began to erode and the Indian "brain drain" began in earnest. The phenomenon that Greenstein observes—of the entire graduating class of the Indian Institute of Technology emigrating—is more recent still.

It is because Bhabha, whatever his other motives in electing to remain in India after the war, was also

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acting in accordance with a tradition with which he was comfortable that he was able, after many years abroad, to settle down in India without a strain. Greenstein recognizes the smoothness of this transition, noting that Bhabha's actions "do not strike me as those of a person acting from a grim sense of duty. Rather, they strike me as the vigorous, contented acts of one who has . . . found a sense of purpose for himself." But because he does not appreciate the strength of those Indian traditions that made up Bhabha's world, he is baffled by Bhabha's decision. He seeks to understand it first by contrasting it with Bhabha's "Westernization" and then by positing his patriotism as a motive, but realizes that neither approach is satisfactory. Indeed it is not, for it separates the man from precisely those historical and cultural considerations to which he should be related.

Another feature of Bhabha's career that Greenstein finds odd is that, while at Cambridge, such an urbane and charming man as he chose the austere and unworldly P. A. M. Dirac as his research supervisor. But for one who had determined to work on subatomic particle physics and cosmic rays, the choice of Dirac as supervisor, however difficult the latter might have been as an individual, was not surprising, for Dirac was, as Greenstein points out, very distinguished in this field. More pertinent might be a question that Greenstein fails to ask: why did Bhabha choose his topic in the first place? Here again, Indian history provides the unstated cause. Early in the twentieth century the Indian physicist and botanist J. C. Bose announced the discovery of a subatomic particle that came to be called, eponymously, boson. Then in 1928, just three years before Bhabha obtained his double First in engineering and mathematics, another Indian physicst, C. V. Raman, discovered a peculiar characteristic of monochromatic light rays which was named the Raman effect. For this discovery Raman was knighted and won the Nobel Prize, the first Indian scientist to be so honored. He then turned to an investigation of cosmic rays.

Bhabha was familiar with, and respected, the work of Bose and Raman. During the war, he was to spend a number of years in Bangalore, the city where Raman had done his work, in the Indian Institute of Science that Raman had helped to found. Nothing could be more natural than that the brilliant young scientist from India, casting about for a suitable subject of research, should choose precisely that area where other Indians had made a name. Greenstein fails to make this connection because, rather than approach Bhabha's work in physics via the tradition of scientific research that prevailed in India, he views it as that of a brilliant man who was, culturally speaking, a Westerner. He sets up an empty mystery of why Bhabha chose Dirac as his supervisor when an investigation of the real mystery of the role of cultural forces in the transmission of intellectual influences might have proved more rewarding.

Greenstein does justice to Bhabha's institution-building genius. But he is at a loss to explain the less savory side of his character, his social remoteness, his haughty, paternalistic attitudes, and his penchant for being waited on. Sometimes he seeks to account for, if not justify, what is obviously alien behavior to him in more senses than one by invoking Bhabha's privileged family background, as when he describes the latter's cultivation of a deliberate distance from the other scientists of his Institute. At other times Greenstein generously attributes Bhabha's actions to his many preoccupations, suggesting that if Bhabha traveled with a retinue of assistants, it must have been because he had so many instructions to issue, as on a particular Sunday when he was boarding a flight to Europe. (Was this the same flight that crashed in the Alps, killing him?) At still other times Greenstein falls back upon the notion that being essentially Western, Bhabha did not know his countrymen well: how else to account for his draconian view that the solution to India's problems lay in the discovery of a cheap contraceptive which, if mixed with rice, could be fed to the vast population? But finally Bhabha's imperious manner confounds and repels Greenstein. Quoting a particularly high-handed memo from Bhabha to the staff of his Insitute, he remarks: "This is not a memo to grown men and women: it is a memo from a father to his children."

Though correct in his observation, Greenstein does not realize that Bhabha's behavior was only a particular manifestation of a common Indian attitude that originated in Mughal or even earlier times and is still prevalent. Greenstein has encountered this attitude and calls it "bureaucratic," infusing into this word all the disgust of which he is capable. A more accurate description would be "bossism," for the attitude is born of a deep-seated desire to exercise power and control and causes anyone with a modicum of authority to lord it over those who have none. It is this attitude which makes the Indian official stand so much on dignity and form, which causes the petty clerk to be so punctilious in checking paperwork for the most trivial errors, and which prevented Homi Bhabha from ever appearing in public in anything but a suit, caused him always to look so stern, and made him so formal and distant towards his colleagues.

Greenstein encounters bossism in public institutions in India and condemns it. He meets it in Bhabha, but fails to recognize it for what it is. Instead, he writes its manifestations down as another of Bhabha's enigmas. Had he grounded Bhabha more firmly in Indian culture, he would have realized that the same impulse that he castigates in the laboratory technician who stymies an important experiment because the paperwork has not been performed, or in the "sullen, uncommunicative officials" who hold up the import of costly scientific equipment, also took the form of obnoxious memos from Bhabha and caused him to take along with him, at the taxpayer's expense, a factotum

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whose sole purpose was to pay his bills because he was too high and mighty to handle cash. Indeed, Bhabha's very ability to cut through red tape and inefficiency by invoking his closeness to Nehru was a form of bossism. In this instance a stronger bossism was encountering and laying low a weaker one, in the process achieving wholly laudable results. But it was bossism all the same.

India, then, is the constant if invisible sub-text of Bhabha's life and work, as it is of all other Indian scientists. This is one sense in which there may be justification in speaking of an "Indian" science: the term suggests that however universal or "international" the scientific quest for truth may be, it is incumbent upon us to root any scientist's life and his/her achievement in the history and culture of the relevant nation. Though former Indian Prime Minister Chandrashekhar probably did not have this sense in mind, his talk of "Indian" science can be valuable in reminding us that the tenets of new historicism and culture criticism are as applicable to the biographies of scientists as they are to the texts of literature.

BRIJRAJ SINGH
English Department
Hostos Community College of the
City University of New York

GEORGE GREENSTEIN replies: I am afraid that Professor Singh overemphasizes the role played by Indian history and culture in nudging Bhabha towards cosmic rays. Bose's work belongs, not to the field of elementary particle physics, but to statistical physics: the term *Boson* denotes not a particle but a class of particles, somewhat as *vegetable* describes a class of organisms. Nor does the Raman effect refer to elementary particles: it relates to the interaction of light with molecules. Bhabha did indeed work under Raman, but not till several years after his student days.

I would agree with Professor Singh that we must root each person's career in his or her culture. But in this case there was a second culture at work—that of science. Science is endlessly opportunistic: whenever, as a result of advances in technology or theory, a new field opens up, people dash in to exploit the new techniques. At the moment in history at which Bhabha was a student, the wave of the future was cosmic ray physics. To this field, as Professor Singh emphasizes, Dirac's was the relevant theory, and Dirac himself was one of the luminaries of Cambridge. All in all, Bhabha's decision to work with him is one of the elements of his life I do *not* find particularly mysterious.

And yes—the flight to which he summoned so many assistants was the flight on which he died. Perhaps I should have mentioned that the *New York Times* carried the next day a front-page article on the crash: among all the fatalities, Bhabha's was the only name it mentioned.

The Mencken Room

I am writing to ask for help in saving one of the most important literary collections in the United States.

I am currently writing a biography of H. L. Mencken. I spend several hours each week doing research in the Mencken Room of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, which contains all of Mencken's private papers and clipping books and most of his manuscripts, including the unpublished "My Life as Author and Editor and Thirty-Five Years of Newspaper Work." It also houses the bulk of Mencken's private library, which includes irreplaceable presentation copies of books by Theodore Dreiser, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill, Willa Cather, Sherwood Anderson, Ring Lardner, and many other American authors. This unique collection is of the highest importance to scholars of American literature and journalism and students of the life and work of H. L. Mencken.

Those of you who have visited the Mencken Room in past years may remember it as a comfortable, pleasantly old-fashioned place in which to work. Unfortunately, the Mencken Room is now in a desperate state of disrepair. The ceiling leaks and has started to crumble. Several shelves of first editions and ancestral records have suffered significant water damage. Even under normal circumstances, the Mencken Room is excessively humid, and some of Mencken's bound manuscripts and clipping books, already fragile with age, have deteriorated noticeably as a result. Unless prompt action is taken, much of the collection could eventually become unusable.

This situation is not due to any carelessness or irresponsibility on the part of the library or of those librarians in charge of the Mencken Room, all of whom fully appreciate the importance of the collection. The problem is simply one of money. The Baltimore public library system is in dire financial straits and cannot afford to repair the Mencken Room or restore Mencken's papers.

I urge you to make a donation to the Enoch Pratt Free Library, specifically earmarked for the restoration and upkeep of the Mencken Room. I also urge you to speak to other potential donors and to help publicize the plight of the Mencken collection in any way possible.

All contributions should be sent directly to Averil Kadis, Director of Public Relations, Enoch Pratt Free Library, 400 Cathedral St., Baltimore, MD 21201. Checks should be made out to the Enoch Pratt Free Library and should be marked "For Restoration of Mencken Room."

TERRY TEACHOUT
Bronxville, New York

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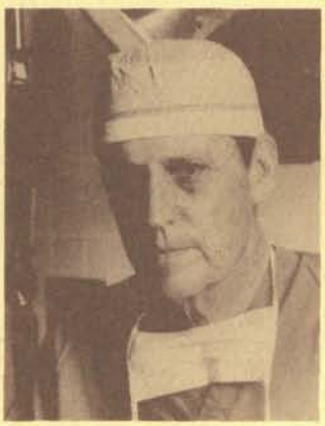

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